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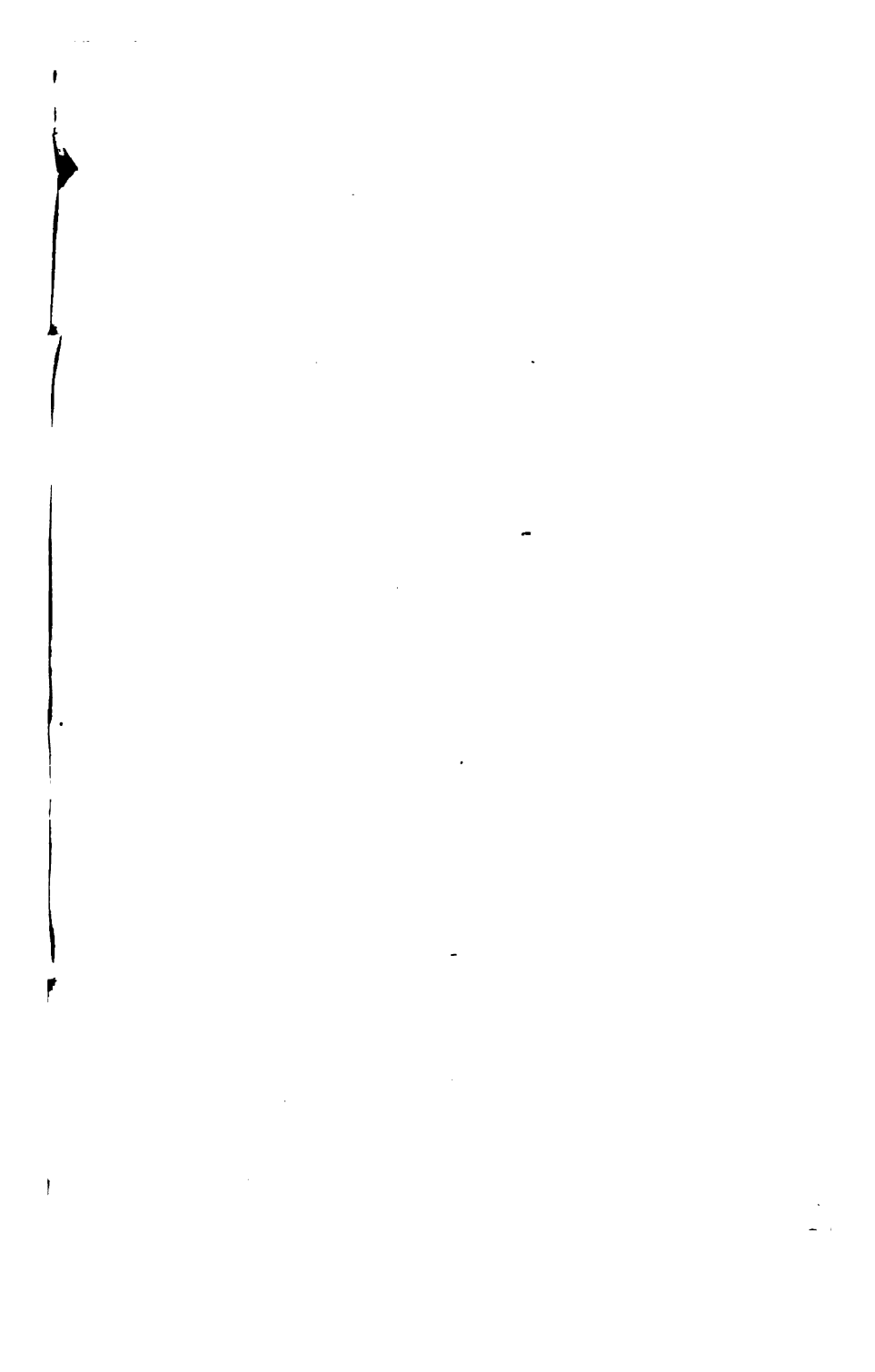
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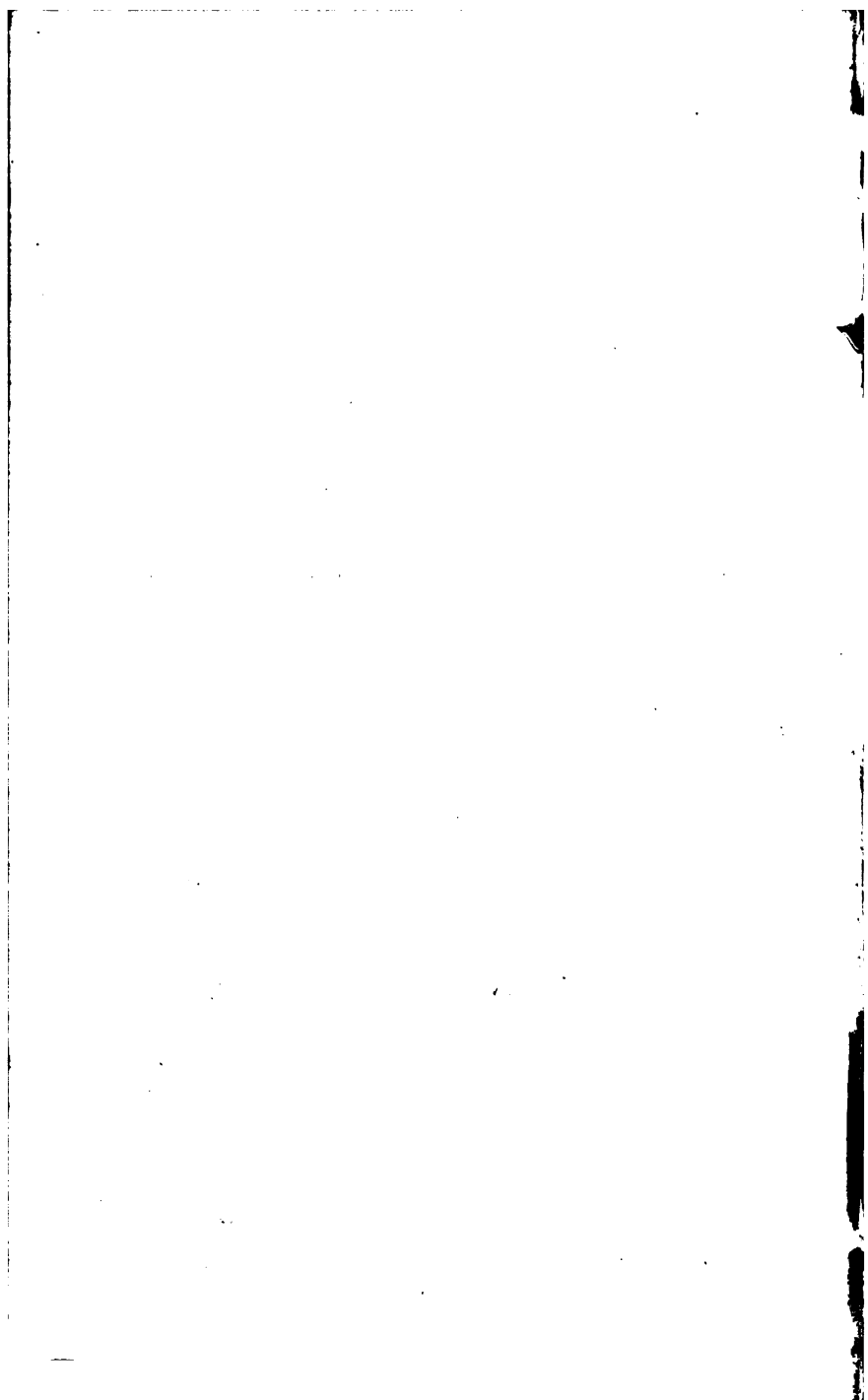
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AN
EXAMINATION
OF
PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S INQUIRY
ON THE
FREEDOM OF THE WILL.

BY JEREMIAH DAY,
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

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AMONG the causes of the lamentable dissensions with which, at the present day, the American churches are agitated, a place has been assigned to President Edwards's Treatise on the Freedom of the Will. It is alledged, that differences of opinion respecting the principles and influence of this great work, have occasioned jealousy and alienation of feeling, among those who ought to be closely united, in the bonds of Christian affection and fellowship. If the fact be really so, it is high time to inquire, whether the fault is in the work itself, or in those who read it, or in those who, *without* having read it, undertake to pronounce authoritatively upon its merits. That it has had, for nearly a century past, a commanding influence, over our religious, as well as our philosophical opinions, will not be questioned by those who have marked attentively the distinguishing features of the age. If this influence is, on the whole, unfavorable to the cause of truth and piety, it becomes us to inquire, in what way its injurious tendency may be counteracted. Some who claim to be considered as orthodox and evangelical Christians, do not hesitate to

express their regret that it has ever been published ; giving a salutary caution to others, against venturing to peruse a work of so questionable a character.

But it is too late to think of encountering it successfully in this way. The book has already taken too strong a hold on the public mind, to admit of its being consigned to oblivion. He who would effectually counteract its influence, must undertake, in sober earnestness, not to rail at it, but to *answer* it. He must meet it with fair and solid argument. He will not find its massive columns give way, before the impulse of gratuitous asseverations, or elegant rhetorical flourishes. If Edwards has imposed upon the religious and philosophical world, by sophistical reasoning, the illusion has made too deep an impression to be obliterated in any other way than by detecting and exposing the sophistry. It will not be sufficient to affirm, that there is *somewhere* a fallacy in his arguments. He who would do away its influence, must analyze the logic, to shew precisely where the sophistry lies, and in what it consists.

But why may we not save ourselves all this trouble ? Why not lay aside metaphysics altogether, as of no use in theological inquiries ; and rely on the simple testimony of scripture alone, as the foundation of our doctrinal belief ? Very excellent advice this, if we can only persuade the religious community to come into the measure. A great advance will be made in the habits of thinking among Christians, when they shall be content to derive all the articles of their religious belief directly from the Bible ; when they shall adopt no theological philosophy, but the philosophy of the prophets and apostles. But what is to be done, when a man brings for-

ward his metaphysical machinery to do the work of *interpreting* the scriptures; when the truths of inspiration are so modified, as to be made to coincide with his preconceived opinions? By what standard is the validity of his philosophical theories to be tried, if they are not weighed in his own balance; if you do not meet him on his own ground, and bring his philosophy to the test of philosophical scrutiny? Do you say, that it would be better to bring it directly to the standard of the scriptures? But he makes his philosophy the standard of scripture, instead of admitting the scriptures to be the standard of his philosophy. There are many who find much less difficulty in encountering an express declaration of the Bible against their opinions, than in meeting a logical argument. Others erect a fabric of metaphysical theology; and when a philosophical objection is brought to bear upon their favorite superstructure, they attempt a defense by declaiming loudly against metaphysics. Edwards's Inquiry on the Will was not written to establish a system of his own, different from any which he thought he found in the scriptures; but to try the pretensions of those who so interpret the Bible as to make it conform to their own philosophy.

There is also another class whose reasonings his Inquiry was intended to meet; those who admit that the doctrines of grace which Edwards believed are really found in the scriptures, but who assign this as a sufficient reason for denying their divine authority; alledging that that can not be the word of God which contains doctrines inconsistent with their philosophy. These men are not to be confuted by quoting passages from the Bible, the claims of which to inspiration they do not admit.

It is alledged, that Edwards's Inquiry is liable to be *perverted*; that it has actually been perverted, to the support of dangerous errors; that "it has become almost the text-book of infidelity."

What good book is there which is not liable to perversion? What volume has been more perverted than the sacred scriptures? This is the text-book of most of the corrupters of Christianity. Even Satan himself can apply its truths to purposes of deception. But is the liability of the Bible to be perverted, a reason why it should not be read and studied? This is professedly the ground, it is true, on which the *Romish* church prohibits the common people from perusing its sacred pages. But will any *Protestant* admit the validity of such a plea for withholding the word of life from the greater portion of our fellow men?

The advocates of error commonly build with plundered materials. It is by artfully blending truth with falsehood, that they endeavor to conceal their designs. A large portion of the weapons with which infidels attack Christianity, consists of objections first brought forward by the friends of the truth, and by them effectually answered. The very positions which some profess to derive from the reasoning of Edwards, are most conclusively overthrown by Edwards himself. We have a striking instance of this in his refutation of the popular objection, that his view of the freedom of the will renders fruitless all endeavors to promote moral improvement *by the use of means*. Is it safe to leave his work to be read by those only who consult it for the purpose of perverting it? If it is liable to perversion by being *misapprehended*, it is highly important that it be so ex-

plained as to be rightly understood. Edwards had once the reputation of being a perspicuous writer. Is it now discovered, that he has produced a work which can not be understood? Or is it the art of *rendering* him unintelligible which has been recently invented? Is not this sometimes undertaken by those who can find no way of *refuting* his arguments but by misrepresenting his meaning?

It must be admitted, however, that an investigation so profound, of a subject so abstruse, requires close and patient thought, on the part of the reader. There are reasons why the Inquiry on the Freedom of the Will is not so well understood at the present day, as it was soon after its first publication. That was a thinking, contemplative age. The present is a stirring, driving, bustling generation, finding little leisure for deep and long continued thought. We can afford to take a rapid glance of a few select passages, from an author of high reputation. To follow him attentively, through the logical distinctions, and statements, and combinations of argument, in a scientific and methodical treatise, is more than is to be expected from the post-haste readers of the present day. But the Inquiry on the Will is not adapted to the comprehension of those who read *extracts* only. The author's habits of study were those of thorough and systematic investigation. He has, accordingly, given to his great work on the will a logical structure, a regular chain of reasoning, an adaptation of the several parts to each other. To be understood, it must be read *as a whole*; not in broken and detached portions. The definitions and explanations at the beginning must be attentively examined, to prepare the way for the course

of argument which follows. Each successive portion of the book is to be illustrated by the reasoning which has preceded. This will require a frequent re-examination of the parts previously read. How few are found willing to devote to it the time and effort which are requisite to enter fully into the views of the author. The rugged path through which he leads us is not strewed with flowers of fancy, nor is our toil beguiled by exciting incidents and poetic imagery. The mine is to be explored, not for the gems which sparkle on its walls, but for the treasures which are to be drawn from its depths.

One reason why Edwards's writings may not be as well understood at the present day, as they were on their first publication, is, that various schemes of metaphysical theology have sprung up since, claiming an affinity with his views, and seeking support from the sanction of his great name; though there is reason to believe, that many of their prominent points are such as he would never have acknowledged as his own. These pretended imitations are not unfrequently read, before the original writings are consulted; and the genuine features are viewed only by the false lights reflected upon them from the caricature. Some take a few broken pieces from the scaffolding which Edwards used, not in constructing a metaphysical system, but in demolishing the theories of others, and combining these fragments with ample materials of their own, erect a superstructure which they denominate his theory. In this way, he is rendered responsible for the numerous additions which his admirers have made to his work.

The *extent* of Edwards's Treatise, and, of course, the labor of reading it through, is increased by his purpose

of not only dislodging his opponents from their main positions, but of pursuing them into all their by-paths, and places of concealment. He is not satisfied with meeting them boldly, and causing them to fall back, in the open field ; but he aims to leave them no opportunity of retreating. Thus he has devoted a long section to the consideration of the comparatively unimportant point, the power of the will to make a choice between things *perfectly indifferent*, for instance, which of two peppercorns to take ; and another portion of the treatise, of nearly the same extent, to the Creator's "placing, in different parts of the world, particles or atoms of matter that are perfectly equal and alike."*

There are some peculiarities in the *language* of Edwards, which require particular attention, on the part of his readers. In the lapse of a century, new terms and phrases in mental philosophy have come into use ; new meanings are attached to words then in use ; and new classifications of the powers of the mind have been introduced. In the time of Edwards, the prevalent philosophy, especially in New England, was that of Locke ; and his language was frequently adopted by metaphysical writers. Since his day, the Scotch and the German philosophy have crossed the Atlantic ; and have brought to us a new modification of the phraseology in mental science.

Edwards was evidently a very clear thinker, and aimed to communicate his thoughts with perspicuity. But he appears to have studied more attentively the *subjects* which he undertook to investigate, than the *language* in which the results of his inquiries were to be clothed.

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 6, and Part IV, Sec. 8.

There is a degree of negligence in his style, in respect to the structure of sentences, and the position of relatives and connectives. Even his definitions are not always given with such nice precision, as to leave no occasion for consulting other passages, to enable us to fix more definitely his meaning.

The principal danger, perhaps, of misapprehension, in reading Edwards on the Will, arises from the *broad* signification which he has given to several of the most important terms in the discussion. Among these, may be mentioned the appellation *Arminian*, which runs through the whole texture of the work. He has thought proper to offer, in his preface, a long apology for its frequent occurrence in the book, and the latitude of meaning which he has given it. He does not, however, use it as a term of *reproach*, an *argumentum ad invidiam*; but merely as a convenient designation of that class of persons who oppose his opinions on the subject of the will. He does not confine it to Arminius and his followers; but applies it to others, who, as he says, "went far beyond" these, and whose "corrupt doctrine," in some points, they "had in abhorrence." Nor does he ascribe to those whom he denominates Arminians, an entire agreement of opinion, even on the freedom of the will. Much less, does he charge upon them a belief in all the *consequences* which he thinks may be logically deduced from their tenets. Probably no individual can be found, who adopts *all* the opinions which Edwards has denominated Arminian. Those may agree in opposing his doctrine, who differ widely from each other, in respect to the *grounds* on which they oppose it.

SECTION I.

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS.

Broad signification given to the term *will*—It is made to include emotions and passions—*Immanent* and *imperative* acts—Threefold division of mental powers—Volition—Choice—Preference—Desire—Volition implies an *agent*—*Voluntary* acts—*Determination* of the will—Definition of *motive*—External and internal motives—Greatest apparent good—Immediate and remote objects of volition—The state and temper of the mind included in Edwards's definition of motive—The *strongest* motive—Tendency of motives to *incline* the will—Does the strongest motive always prevail?—*Cause* of volition—A cause is something more than a mere antecedent—Condition, or *causa sine qua non*—*Negative* cause.

Of the four parts into which President Edwards has divided his whole work, the first is occupied with an explanation and statement of the leading terms, and points of discussion; "wherein are explained and stated various terms and things, belonging to the subject of the ensuing discourse." With these, the reader ought to make himself familiar, before proceeding to the argumentative parts of the work. This is the more necessary, as the author has given to several of the principal terms upon which his reasoning turns, a signification somewhat different from their meaning in customary use.

THE WILL.

To the term *will*, he has given a broader signification than has commonly been assigned it by European writers. They limit it to what he calls *imperative* acts;

to those determinations of the mind that are immediately followed by some bodily motion or mental state which is dependent on the will. According to Mr. Locke, it is "a power to begin or forbear, continue, or end, several actions of our minds, and motions of our bodies, barely by a thought or preference of the mind, *ordering*, or as it were *commanding*, the doing or not doing such or such a particular action."* But Edwards includes among acts of the will our *emotions* and *passions*, which he denominates *affections*. "The affections of the soul," he observes, "are not properly distinguished from the will, as though they were two faculties of the soul. All acts of the affections of the soul are, in some sense, acts of the will, and all acts of the will are acts of the affections. All exercises of the will are, in some degree or other, exercises of the soul's appetite or aversion; or which is the same thing, of its love or hatred. The soul wills one thing rather than another, or chooses one thing rather than another, no otherwise than as it loves one thing more than another."† "The affections are only certain modes of the exercise of the will."‡ "The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."§

Yet Edwards himself finds occasion to discriminate between *immanent* and *imperative* acts. "There are two kinds of exercises of grace. 1. There are those that some call *immanent* acts; that is, those exercises of grace that remain within the soul; that begin and

* Locke's Essay, Book II, Chap. 21.

† Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England, Part I.

‡ Freedom of the Will, Part III, Sec. 4.

§ Treatise on the Affections, Part I.

are terminated there, without any immediate relation to any thing to be done outwardly, or to be brought to pass in practice. 2. There is another kind of acts of grace, that are more strictly called practical or effective exercises, because they immediately respect *something to be done*. They are the exertions of grace in the *commanding* acts of the will, directing the outward actions." The *practical* exercise of grace, he speaks of, as "that exertion of the mind which issues and terminates in what they call the *imperate* acts of the will."*

The place which is here assigned to the affections, is in conformity with the ancient and long continued distribution of the mental powers under *two* heads, the *understanding* and the *will*.

"God has endowed the soul," says Edwards, "with two faculties: One is that by which it is capable of perception and speculation, or by which it discerns, and views, and judges of things; which is called the *understanding*. The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way *inclined* with respect to the things it views or considers; either is inclined *to* them, or is disinclined and averse *from* them; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things as an indifferent, unaffected spectator; but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting. This faculty,"—"as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the will."†

Though President Edwards agrees with many European writers, in dividing the powers of the mind be-

* Religious Affections, Part III, Sign 12.

† Treatise on the Affections, Part I.

tween the understanding and the will; yet he differs from most of them, in the wide extent which he gives to the latter faculty. They commonly confine it to *imperative* acts; leaving the emotions and passions, if any definite place is allowed them, to fall under the head of the understanding. His arrangement, which considers the emotions and passions as belonging to the will, is quite as rational as theirs. The mental states which he calls affections are as different from perception and knowledge, as from imperative acts of will. The fact is, that each of these methods of classifying our faculties, is found to be defective. A *threefold* division of our mental powers is greatly needed, and, it is hoped, will soon prevail. Even then there will be occasion for a *subdivision* of each of the general heads. Although, as Edwards says, all acts of the affections of the soul are, in *some* sense, acts of the will; yet emotions and passions are not, in *every* respect, like imperative volitions. There is a difference between loving an *object*, a *thing*, and loving, or desiring, or commanding an *action*, for the purpose of obtaining that thing. Loving an orange is not the same as ordering a motion of the hand to take it. Immanent acts, according to Edwards himself, are those acts which "remain within the soul, that begin and terminate there, without any immediate relation to any thing to be done outwardly." Even when that which is willed is an *action*, some make a distinction between being *pleased* with the action, and *commanding* or willing it. But Edwards, in one passage at least, appears to consider them, though with some hesitation, as being the same. "An appearing most agreeable or pleasing to the mind," he observes, "and

the mind's preferring and choosing, seem *hardly* to be properly and *perfectly* distinct."* However this may be, yet a distinction is doubtless to be made between being pleased with an *object* or *thing*, and being pleased with an *action*.

In reading Edwards's Inquiry, it is important that we carry along in our minds the distinction between *emotions* and *imperative* acts of will ; as his arguments are some of them applicable to the former class, while others relate chiefly to the latter ; though he rarely gives notice to the reader, to which of the two his observations are to be applied. Most commonly, he appears to have *imperative* acts before his mind, especially in replying to European writers, who generally confine the term will to such acts. One reason of his giving it a more enlarged signification may have been, that he might include under this faculty every kind of mental act to which his opponents might ascribe a moral character. His work is an Inquiry respecting "*that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential to moral agency, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame.*" Some of his opponents might consider the seat of moral character to be in emotions or affections, others in purposes, others in imperative or executive acts. Had he confined his reasoning to one of these classes, the others would have eluded the force of his arguments. He must lay his foundation broad enough to enable him to include them all within the scope of his inquiry. He himself considers "*true religion as consisting, in great part, in holy affections.*" This is a point which

* Inquiry on the Will, Part I, Sec. 2.

he has undertaken to prove by a regular course of argument.*

As *volition* is the technical word for an *act* of choice, a latitude of meaning is given to it, corresponding to the extent ascribed to the *faculty* of will. Affections and purposes, as well as imperative acts, are considered by Edwards as volitions. In many instances, his arguments are equally applicable to each of these kinds of acts. In other cases, in which they could be properly applied to only one of the classes, it is to be regretted, that he has not been sufficiently careful to apprise his readers of the limited application of the reasoning.

He has also given a broad signification to the words *choice* and *choosing*. "An act of the will is the same as an act of choosing or choice.—Whatever names we call the act of the will by, a choosing, refusing, approving, disapproving, liking, disliking, embracing, rejecting, determining, directing, commanding, forbidding, inclining or being averse to, being pleased or displeased with; all may be reduced to this of *choosing*."† The expressions *liking* or *disliking*, *inclining* or *being averse to*, being *pleased* or *displeased with*, belong properly to emotions or affections, while *determining*, *directing*, *commanding*, and *forbidding*, are applicable to imperative acts only. An emotion chooses an *object* or *thing*; an imperative volition chooses an *action*. The action is commonly chosen, as a means of obtaining some chosen object. The motion of the hand is ordered by the will, to receive the prize which is offered to its acceptance.

* Treatise on the Affections, Part I.

† Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 1.

Volition is commonly understood to imply *preference*; a deciding between two objects of choice. But Edwards, though he says that in every volition there is preference, yet appears not to confine volition to the act of preferring one of *two things*.

"In every act of the will whatsoever, the mind chooses one thing rather than another; it chooses something rather than the contrary, or rather than the *want* or non-existence of that thing." He uses the word preference to express that which is opposed to "a state of perfect indifference." The difference between Edwards and Locke, with respect to the application of the word preference to volition, is easily explained, by adverting to the fact, that Edwards gives the will a much broader signification than Locke; the latter confining the term to *imperative* or *executive* acts. Both agree that the preference of an *act*, immediately dependent on the will, is volition. But the preference of an *object* or *thing* does not come within Mr. Locke's definition; while it is included in President Edwards's, which comprises affections, as well as imperative acts of will.

In reference to the frequently agitated question, whether volitions are *desires*, it is important to mark the difference between the *limited* and the *extended* definition of the will. There are desires which are not *executive* volitions. But they may be emotions or affections, and therefore acts of will in President Edwards's sense. Imperative volitions, if it is proper to call them desires at all, are not desires of *objects* or *things*, but of *acts*; of bodily or mental acts, which immediately follow volition. A thirsty man desires a draught of water, which is offered him. This is an emotion. He wills to move his

hand to take the water. This is an executive act, which is, perhaps, more properly called a command than a desire. Imperative volition wills an act, as the means of obtaining some good in view, which is the object of desire.

Were it not for the strange abstractions which are made by some writers, in reference to the will, it would be needless to observe that according to President Edwards, volition always implies an *agent*, a being who wills, a mind which puts forth acts of choice. "In every act of will whatever, the *mind* chooses one thing rather than another.—The very act of volition itself is doubtless a determination of *mind*; that is, it is the *mind's* drawing up a conclusion, or coming to a choice." Volitions are not effects of such a nature, that the man is only the *subject* of them. He is truly their author. They are *his* acts, and not the acts of another. They are not brought into-being by some other cause, without his agency. This agency is so essential to their nature, that it is that of which they *consist*. A man's willing, and his agency in willing, are one and the same thing. They are no more distinct, than the *motion* of a body is distinct from the body moving. "Volition," says Dr. Samuel West, in his reply to Edwards, "when used with a proper meaning, that is, when reduced to the being of which it is the property in exercise, can signify nothing but *the being operating or acting*." p. 21. "An action," says Dr. Thomas Brown, "can not be any thing distinct from the agent, more than beauty, from some object that is beautiful." Sect. 73. "The *mind's* making its choice," says Edwards, "is properly the act of the will."

The act is not considered by him as so distinct from the agency of the man, as to give occasion to speak of him as being the *cause* of his own volitions. That he is their author, that he puts them forth, is implied in their very nature. When a man sees or hears, we never doubt, whether it is he himself that sees or hears. Yet we are not accustomed to speak of him as being the *cause* of his seeing or hearing.

It is true, that President Edwards treats particularly of the cause of volition. But the inquiry which he makes is not, whether a man is the cause of his own acts, in the sense of being the *author* of them. This he evidently considers too obvious a truth, to need investigation. But the question with him is, whether there is any thing which causes the *man* to will as he does. He is inquiring concerning a cause *previous* to the agency in particular volitions; "why the *soul* exerts such a particular act, at such a time." The question which he proposes to answer is not, *who* or *what* it is that wills; but, *why* the man wills, and why he wills one way rather than another. Edwards does not put an interval between a man's acts, and his agency in those acts. His *present* agency may, indeed, be a consequence of his *previous* agency. His present acts may be carrying into execution an antecedent purpose. "The will is said to be determined, when *in consequence* of some action or influence, its choice is directed to and fixed upon a particular object." But this previous agency of the man is as distinct from his present agency, as it is from his present volitions. Present acts can not, according to Edwards, be the *effect* of present agency. "An active being can bring no effects to pass by his activity, but

what are *consequent* upon his acting." "His action, or exercise of his activity, must be *prior to the effects* of his activity."*

Edwards and others often use the terms volition, choice, &c. without particularly mentioning the agency of the man who chooses. Thus, in speaking of the influence of motives, he says, "I have respect to the strength of the whole that operates to produce a particular *act of volition*." An inattentive reader might infer from this, that the writer represents motives as producing volition directly, without reference to any other agency. But he had immediately before said, "by motive, I mean the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the *mind* to volition. Many particular things may concur, and unite their strength, to induce the mind," &c.† evidently implying, that in the use of the terms volition, choice, &c., the agency of the mind is to be considered as included.

VOLUNTARY ACTS.

There is an ambiguity in the word *voluntary*, as used by Edwards and other New England writers. By a voluntary act, European authors commonly mean an act which is *dependent* on the will; one which is the *consequence* of volition, not volition itself. Thus Dugald Stewart, while he affirms, that the power of *volition* is not suspended in sleep, yet supposes that our "*voluntary operations*" are discontinued; that is, "that those operations of the mind which *depend* on our voli-

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 4.

† Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 2.

tion are suspended." He ascribes the peculiar phenomena of dreaming to a suspension, not of the *exercise* of the will, but of its *influence* upon the body, and upon other faculties of the mind. According to this view of the subject, when a man speaks, the motion of his lips is the voluntary act, not the volition which wills that motion. But according to Edwards, the volition itself is a voluntary act. "A voluntary determining is the same thing as making a choice." An act of the will can not be voluntary, in *both* senses of the term, except in those cases in which one volition is dependent on another. Fallacious arguments are sometimes constructed by confounding the two meanings; or by taking it for granted, that every act of the mind which is voluntary in one of these senses, must be voluntary in the other also.

As President Edwards considers the *affections* as belonging to the will, and every act of the will as being voluntary, he would of course speak of the affections as voluntary acts. But others make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary emotions, considering those only as voluntary which are *dependent* on a preceding act of the will. Others again discriminate between voluntary and *spontaneous* emotions or affections, considering the former only as possessing a moral character. The distinction made by some of the German and French philosophers, between voluntary and spontaneous acts, appears to be this, that the former are consequent on *deliberation*; while the latter break forth instinctively, without waiting for the mind to deliberate. "Reflection," says Cousin, "is the condition of every voluntary act."

The great subject of the Freedom of the Will, as treated of by President Edwards, may be comprised in the two questions, Does *any thing* determine the will, and if any thing, *What* determines it? It is important, therefore, in reading his work, to know what signification he gives to these inquiries. In Sec. 2, of Part I, he explains what he would be understood to mean by the phrase *determining the will*. It is not determining in favor of an *object* of choice, or of an *action* which depends upon choice. This is volition itself, the very thing which is supposed to be determined. Nor does he understand by the above phrase, simply determining the mind to *will*. But he means, determining it to will *one way rather than another*; "causing that the act of the will, or choice, should be *thus, and not otherwise*;" or, as he elsewhere expresses it, "determining the act of choice itself, among various possible acts of choice." This implies, that there is something *antecedent* to the volition, which renders it *such* a volition as it is.

It is not an answer to the question, What determines the will, in a particular act of choice, to say, that the *man himself* determines it, in the very act of willing. His willing, his determining between different objects of choice, is the volition itself. The real point of inquiry is not, Why is there a volition; but, What determines *him* to will as he does? What determines him to determine in favor of this object of choice? He is offered a bribe. He resolves to take it. Has any consideration determined him to will thus? To say that *he alone* has any influence in the determination, is to answer our *other* question in the negative. It is to say, that *nothing* determines him to will as he does. There

may indeed be a fair inquiry, whether his *present* act may not be owing to a *preceding* choice of his own; and this, if followed up, will lead to the question so fully examined by Edwards, whether *every* volition can be determined by a preceding volition of the agent himself.

MOTIVES.

One of the terms to which Edwards has given a broad signification is *motive*; a very important word, in the controversy concerning the Freedom of the Will. This is his definition; "By motive, I mean the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly. Many particular things may concur, and unite their strength, to induce the mind; and when it is so, all together are, as it were, one complex motive."*

Respecting this definition, we may observe, that it is intended to explain what *he* means by the word motive. It does not designate all the significations which are given it by *others*. "By motive," he says, "*I* mean the whole of that which moves," &c. It was very proper for him to explain in what sense he proposed to use the term. But a writer of controversy has frequent occasion to use words, not only with the meaning which he himself considers the most proper, but also with the significations which are given to it by his opponents. Unless he does this, he may not always be able to expose the fallacy of their arguments, which is often concealed under ambiguous phraseology. They, as

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 2.

well as he, will claim the privilege of stating what signification *they* attach to particular words and phrases. "By motives," says Dr. Dana, in his Examination of Edwards on the Will, "*we* mean *external* reasons or inducements exhibited to the view of a moral agent." Controversies can not commonly be brought to a termination, by a demand from either of the parties, that a word shall be used in *one* sense only.

Again, the term motive, is defined by Edwards, in its *broadest* signification, to express "the *whole* of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition; whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly." It may be a "*complex* motive." According to the definition, it may embrace not only the *immediate* antecedents of volition, but those which are more remote; not only internal states of mind, but external objects. As Edwards considers the affections, as well as imperative volitions, to be acts of the will, the motive which excites the former may be something external, in view of the understanding; while the affections themselves may move the mind to put forth imperative acts. He has sometimes been represented as identifying volition with motives. But he has furnished no ground for the absurd supposition, that a particular volition can be a *motive to itself*. What may be inferred from his statement is, that *affections* may be motives to *imperative* volitions; not that *every* motive is in his view a volition, or every volition a motive; not that imperative acts are direct motives to the affections. A man may use means to bring the *objects* of the affections distinctly before his mind, and in this way, may, in many cases, succeed in exciting the affections themselves. But they do not

come at his mere command. They do not appear, when he simply wills or purposes to have them. There must be some other motive, to call them forth. The younger Edwards speaks of "motive, in the *large* sense of President Edwards, including reasons and external objects, with the taste and bias of the mind." When external objects are spoken of as motives, the term external is not to be considered as confined to *material* objects; but as including every thing which does not belong to the mind of the agent, and which, when apprehended by his understanding, has an influence on his choice. In this sense, the great truths of religion, the divine commands, and promises, and threatenings, may be motives.

When we analyze what Edwards calls a complex motive, and consider separately the "many things" which he represents as combining their influence, there may be occasion to speak of some one of these as itself a motive; or in nearer conformity with his definition, as a *part* of the complex motive. He is not to be charged with the absurdity of ascribing volition to the power of motives *alone*, in such a sense as to exclude the *agency of the mind* in willing. Motive is that which "moves, excites, or invites the *mind* to volition." Not only is the mind the agent that wills; but, in the case of imperative volitions, at least, the motive immediately *preceding* is a state of the mind. It is true that Edwards, after having given his meaning distinctly, in his definition, uses the abbreviated form of expression, motive has a "tendency to excite and induce *the choice*," it being evidently understood that choice is an act of the mind.

A motive, according to Edwards, is not merely an *object*, which is apprehended by the understanding, without having any influence in giving direction to the volition. It takes its name not simply from the fact that it is actually *chosen* ; but from its power to "move, excite, or invite the mind to volition. The notion of *exciting*, is exerting influence, to cause the effect to arise, or come forth into existence."

THE GREATEST APPARENT GOOD.

In explaining the nature of motives, President Edwards gives us to understand what he means by the phrase *the greatest apparent good*.* It is not always that which is, *in reality*, the greatest good ; but that which, at the time, *appears* to the agent to be such. It is that which is to him the *most agreeable* or *pleasing* ; not in every case, that which *ought* to be most agreeable or pleasing to him ; not that which a sound judgment would decide to be the greatest good.

When Edwards says, that "volition has always for its *object* the thing which appears most agreeable," he considers it important to distinguish carefully between what he calls the "*direct* and *immediate* object of the act of volition," and that which is indirect and remote. According to him, the immediate objects of a man's volitions are *his own acts*. This must mean, not that acts of *will* are objects to themselves ; but that *other* acts which are *consequent* on volition, such as bodily motions, are the objects of the acts of the will. "If strict

propriety of speech be insisted on, it may more properly be said, that the voluntary action which is the immediate *consequence* and fruit of the mind's volition or choice, is determined by that which appears most agreeable, than that the preference or choice itself is." Even this assertion requires farther explanation. It is applicable to *imperative* volitions only. In the example which the author gives, that of the drunkard, if he drinks to gratify his appetite, the bodily action of drinking is that which he imperatively wills, and that which Edwards calls the immediate object of his volition. But the gratification of his *appetite* is the ultimate object of his *desire*. This is not to be obtained by his merely ordering it. It will not come at his bidding. The act of drinking is willed as a *means* of procuring the enjoyment which he seeks. The objects of what Edwards calls *affections*, which he considers as belonging to the will, are not commonly *actions*, but *things*. What he calls the *remote* object of volition, is, in most cases, the primary object of affection or desire, and that which is frequently spoken of as the direct object of choice. A purse of guineas is offered to a man. He puts forth his hand to take it. The gold is the object of his desire. The motion of his hand is willed, as the means of obtaining the prize.

Edwards expresses a doubt whether "appearing most agreeable" is that which *determines* volition, or is volition itself. "An appearing most agreeable or pleasing to the mind, and the mind's *preferring* and *choosing*, seem *hardly* to be properly and perfectly distinct." In this one passage, which has been the subject of so much critical commentary, the author has apparently blended

together what to many minds, perhaps to most, will appear to be distinct. If it be admitted, that being pleased with an *action* is the same as willing it; yet the being pleased with a *thing*, an object presented to the understanding, may be that greatest apparent good, or appearance of good, which *determines* the consequent imperative volition. And in the opinion of many writers on the subject, the being pleased with a particular external *action*, is followed by another distinct act of the will, *ordering* that action.

That which is the greatest apparent good to a man, is not always an *object of sense*, or any merely personal gratification. It may be the prosperity of the divine kingdom, the welfare of his country, the discharge of his duty, obedience to the dictates of conscience. These may be more pleasing to him than sensual indulgence, or the rewards of ambition or avarice. "It is most agreeable to some men," says Edwards, "to follow their *reason*; and to others, to follow their *appetites*."

Among the kinds of influence which are concerned in determining a man to will in a particular way, Edwards mentions the *state and temper* of the mind itself. There must not only be a mind, to be the author of each volition, but the *state* of the mind, at the time, is to be taken into account, in inquiring what it is that decides the *nature* of the volition. "The *state of the mind* that views a proposed object of choice, is another thing that contributes to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of that object; the particular temper which the mind has *by nature*, or that has been introduced or established by *education*, example, custom, or some other means; or the frame or state that the mind is in, on a

particular occasion. That object which appears agreeable to one, does not so to another. And the same object does not always appear alike agreeable to the *same* person, at different times."

THE STRONGEST MOTIVE.

When different motives are compared together, some may be considered as having a more powerful influence on the will than others. It is the opinion of Edwards, that "it is that motive which, as it stands in view of the mind, is the **STRONGEST**, that *determines* the will."* This he undertakes to *prove*, in a succeeding part of his work. In the section before us, he states what he *means* by the strongest motive. "That motive which has a less degree of previous advantage, or tendency to move the will, or that appears less inviting, as it stands in view of the mind, is what I call a weaker motive. On the contrary, that which appears most inviting, and has, by what appears concerning it to the understanding or apprehension, the greatest degree of previous tendency to excite and induce the choice, is what I call the strongest motive. And *in this sense*, I suppose the will is always determined by the strongest motive."

It has been said, that Edwards has not shewn in what the strength of motives consists. He has told us distinctly what he would be understood to *mean* by the strength of motives. "I think it must be allowed by all," he observes, "that every thing which is properly called a motive, excitement, or inducement, to a perceiving, willing agent, has some sort and degree of *tendency*, or advantage, to move or excite the will, *pre-*

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 2.

vious to the effect, or to the act of the will excited. This *previous tendency* of the motive is what I call the *strength* of the motive." Again, "when I speak of the *strongest* motive, I have respect to the strength of the *whole* that operates to induce to a particular act of volition, whether that be the strength of one thing alone, or of many together." What he means by the strength of a motive, is not its actual *prevalence* in any particular case, but its *previous tendency* to move or excite the will. The actual prevalence, in particular instances, may furnish *evidence* of the strength of a motive; but is not that in which its strength *consists*. When a martyr "gives his body to be burned," this is proof, that he is under the influence of some powerful motive. But the strength of this motive does not lie in the martyrdom. It must have previously existed. This previous tendency is the essential quality which is common to all motives, however various may be their particular natures. "Things that exist," says Edwards, "in view of the mind, have their strength, tendency, or advantage to move or excite its will, from many things appertaining to the nature and circumstances of the *thing viewed*, the nature and circumstances of the *mind that views*, and the degree and manner of its *views*; of which it would perhaps be hard to make a perfect enumeration." It could not be expected of him, surely, that he would give a detailed account of all the particulars which constitute the tendency here spoken of, or which are the cause of it. This would be to enumerate all the objects, and qualities, and circumstances, and changes, which are either agreeable or disagreeable, in the works of nature, and the transformations of art. "Particularly to enumer-

ate," he observes, "all things pertaining to the mind's view of the objects of volition, which have influence, in their appearing agreeable to the mind, would be a matter of no small difficulty, and might require a treatise by itself." He speaks, however, of the nature and circumstances of the *object* proposed to choice, the pleasant or unpleasant *concomitants* and *consequences*, the greater or less *distance of time*, weakness or firmness of *belief*, faint or vivid *apprehension* of the object, *state* and *temper* of the mind, as modifying the degree of tendency to excite the will.

It may be said, perhaps, that the point in debate respecting the influence of motives, is here *taken for granted*, in the definition of the strongest motive. The inquiry is proposed, whether the will is always determined by the strongest motive. The strongest motive is then defined to be that which has the greatest tendency to excite or move, that is, to determine the will. This implies that the strongest motive always prevails. For, from the very nature of tendency, the result to which any thing tends must follow, if there is no equal or greater *counteracting* tendency. It may be thought, perhaps, that *something else* may interpose to modify the power of motives, so as to give the weaker a prevalence over the stronger; that there may be a regard to *principle*, a feeling of *obligation*, dictates of *conscience*, &c. But whatever this something else may be, if it has any influence in giving direction to the will, it comes under Edwards's definition of motive. "By motive, I mean the *whole* of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or *many things* conjunctly."

It must be admitted, then, I think, that according to his definition, the strongest motive must always prevail. He himself asserts that the position, "that the will is always determined by the strongest motive, carries much of its own evidence with it." Still the definition does not close the door to discussion on the subject. The real points of inquiry are, whether motives have *any* determining influence over the will; and if they have, whether the influence of one motive is ever *greater* than that of another. These are the points which Edwards discusses, when he comes to the argumentative part of his book. For the present, he is giving definitions and explanations. When he proposed to examine the question, whether the will is determined by motives, he had a right to state, in what sense he would be understood to use the term motive. His opponents also can claim the privilege of declaring what meaning *they* think proper to annex to the same word. If they choose to consider a motive as merely *an object* presented before the mind, but having no tendency to incline the will one way or another, and if they will *adhere* to this explanation, they have a right so to do. But neither party ought to expect, that a definition can determine any controversy, unless it be a merely verbal question. A clear definition, however, though it is not itself an argument, yet may be of important use, in enabling us to understand the scope of a writer's reasoning. In whatever way we may define the word motive, the inquiry whether objects of choice have any tendency to give direction to volition, and whether one object has a greater influence upon the will than another, is a *question of fact*, to be determined, not by defining, but by an ap-

peal to observation and consciousness. If it can be shewn, that the luxuries of a voluptuous metropolis present no allurements to vicious indulgence; that the splendors of a throne never excite an ambitious man to action; that to the lovers of gain, the offer of a shilling is as powerful an inducement to effort, as the promise of a purse of guineas; in short, that all objects of choice have equal influence on the will, or none at all; then it will follow, that Edwards's definition of the strongest motive has no corresponding *reality*, in the nature and relations of things. We have no reason to wonder, that the charge of taking things for granted should be brought against him, by those who have read only that portion of his book which is appropriated to *statements* and *definitions*; and who have not ventured to advance to the succeeding parts, in which all the reasoning of the author is contained. It is not strange, that they find no convincing argument, where he had not even attempted to argue.

CAUSE OF VOLITION.

The inquiry respecting the determination of the will, brings before us the subject of the *cause* of volition. We have here another important term, which frequently occurs in President Edwards's Inquiry. Although he postponed the definition of it, till he had entered upon the argumentative part of his book, yet it may, without impropriety, be introduced in this place. "I sometimes use the word *cause*, in this Inquiry, to signify any *antecedent*, either natural or moral, positive or negative, on which an event, either a thing, or the manner or circumstance of a thing, so depends, that it is the ground

and reason, either in whole or in part, why it is, rather than not ; or why it is as it is, rather than otherwise.”* In this definition, there are several particulars which deserve consideration.

In the first place, it is intended to be applicable, not only to *things*, but to “the *manner and circumstance*” of things. A cause may be the ground and reason, not only why a thing “*is*, rather than not,” but “why it is *as it is*, rather than otherwise.” The inquiry concerning the influence of moral causes upon the will, is not so much, why there are volitions, as why there are *such and such* volitions, rather than the contrary ; why a man loves the world, rather than God ; why he practices iniquity, rather than virtue.

Secondly, the term cause is applied, not only to *all* the antecedents of an event, taken collectively, but to *any one* of them, taken separately ; to that which is the ground and reason of a thing, “either in *whole or in part*.” According to the definition, that may be called a cause, in reference to a particular effect, for which it is, *of itself*, insufficient ; but to which it is adequate, in *connection with something else*. If it has a share of influence, in bringing the result to pass, it may be denominated a cause. In this respect, the definition which we are now considering, differs from the author’s definition of motive, by which he means “the *whole* of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly.”

Again, a thing is not a cause, merely because it is an *antecedent*. It must be an antecedent on which some-

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 3.

thing *depends*. Antecedence is only *one* of the elements in causation. The other is what is called dependence, in reference to the effect, and efficacy, in reference to the cause. To every event, there are thousands and millions of antecedents, to which it has no relation, except priority in the order of time. But in the relation of a cause to its effect, there is not only antecedence, but *influence*. "Dependence on the influence of a cause, is the very notion of an effect. If there be no such relation between one thing and another, consisting in the connection and dependence of one thing on the influence of another, then it is certain there is no such relation between them, as is signified by the terms cause and effect."*

The word dependence may sometimes be used to express the relation of an effect, not to its proper cause, but to what may be called *causa sine qua non*, a mere condition, *without* which the effect could not take place. In this sense, *space* is a condition, without which *matter* could not exist. Every material substance must occupy a certain portion of space. But space has nothing to do in bringing matter into existence. It is not, in the proper sense, the *cause* of matter. A body can not *move*, except in space. But space, though a *condition* of the motion, is not the cause. Every volition implies an *object*. There can be no choice, where there is nothing to be chosen, nothing in view of the mind. Many consider objects of thought as *conditions* of choice, who do not admit, that they have any determining influence upon the will; that they are properly *causes* of volition.

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 8.

They merely furnish an *opportunity* for choice, without giving any direction to the will. On this supposition, volitions are dependent upon objects, not for their actual existence, much less for being one way rather than the contrary; but merely for the *possibility* of existence. Such a dependence is not all that is intended by Edwards, in his definition of cause. A cause, according to him, is an "antecedent on which an event *so* depends, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole or in part," not why the event *may* be, but "why *it is*, rather than not; or why it is *as it is*, rather than otherwise." This is as applicable to *volitions*, as to any thing else. Indeed, the definition was given with special reference to the will. "It is as repugnant to reason to suppose, that an *act of the will* should come into existence without a cause, as to suppose the human soul, or an angel, or the globe of the earth, or the whole universe, should come into existence without a cause."*

Edwards does not maintain, that every antecedent which is *certainly connected* with a consequent event, is of course its cause. To render it a cause, it must be "*so* connected, that it truly belongs to the reason why the proposition which affirms that event is true." Our foreknowledge that the sun will rise to-morrow, is certainly connected with that event; but it is not the *cause* of the sun's rising. The foreknowledge of God that he would create the world, was infallibly connected with the work of creation. But this foreknowledge was not the creating act. "I allow," says Edwards, "what Dr. Whitby says to be true, that mere knowledge does not

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 3.

affect the thing, to *make* it more certain, or more future."* There is a sense, indeed, in which God's perfect knowledge may be said to be the ground or reason of his purposes and his acts. His omniscient view of the natures, and of what *would* be the consequent results, of all *possible* existences, was the ground of his giving actual being to those which would best accomplish his designs of benevolence. His infinite knowledge of *possible* events, may be considered as a ground of his purposes; and his purposes, the ground of his knowledge of what he would actually bring to pass.

But what does President Edwards mean by a *negative* cause? Is it absolute nothing? Or is it something which has no influence as a cause? After devoting so large a portion of his work to the purpose of proving, that every volition must have a cause, is nothing more intended than this, that the cause of each volition is *either something or nothing*; either a real cause or no cause? His meaning may be easily learned, from the illustration which he has given. "The absence of the sun in the night, is not the cause of the falling of the dew at that time, in the same manner as its beams are the cause of the ascending of the vapors in the day time; and its withdrawment in the winter is not, in the same manner, the cause of the freezing of the water, as its approach in the spring is the cause of their thawing. But yet the withdrawment or absence of the sun is an antecedent, with which these effects in the night and winter are connected, and on which they depend; and is one thing that belongs to the ground and reason why

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 12.

they come to pass at that time, rather than at other times ; though the absence of the sun is nothing positive, nor has any positive influence.”* A *shadow* is, strictly speaking, a nonentity ; the mere absence of light from a particular place. When we are enjoying the refreshing coolness of a shade-tree, our gratification is owing, not to any positive agency in the shade itself ; but to real causes, which produce in us agreeable sensations, when not counteracted by the direct rays of a summer’s sun. A discontinuance of a positive cause, may be followed by a cessation of its appropriate effects. The removal of one of the elements of a complex cause, may occasion a change in the results produced by the combination.

* Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 3

SECTION II.

PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY.

Common necessity—It implies supposable opposition of will—General and particular necessity—Philosophical necessity—Necessary *existence*—Different *grounds* of necessary existence—*Consequential necessity*—Necessary *connection* of events—Are volitions necessarily connected with any antecedent except divine *foreknowledge*?—Is *certainty* the same as necessity?—Impossibility—Contingence—A contingent cause.

No term, perhaps, frequently used by Edwards, is more liable to misapprehension and perversion than *necessity*. The arguments in favor of independent volition, owe a great portion of their plausibility to the changes artfully rung on the ambiguities of the two words necessity and liberty. Necessity, as the term is most commonly understood, is admitted to be inconsistent with accountability. It requires but a slight variation of the language in which this familiar and acknowledged truth is expressed, to convert it into the universal proposition, that *all* necessity is inconsistent with accountability. Whatever, then, you wish to prove to be inconsistent with accountability, you have only to call it necessity, and you will gain your point, with that very numerous class with whom words are arguments. If the impression from a simple statement is too slight, you may deepen it sufficiently, by reiterating necessity, necessity, in varied combination with its qualifying adjuncts, physical, fatal, &c. In like manner, from the admitted truth, that *liberty*, in the *common* acceptance of the term, is

essential to accountability, the inference is drawn, that the want of liberty of *any* kind, or of any thing which a philosopher chooses to *call* liberty, is inconsistent with accountability.

Edwards has endeavored to guard against misconstruction, by explaining and defining necessity. Still there is reason to believe, that the meaning which he intends to give the term, is not always well understood. He does not appear to have aimed to present a scientific view of all the varieties of necessity; but to mark those distinctions which he would have occasion to apply in the course of his inquiry. He first explains the *customary* signification of the term necessity, in the common intercourse of life. "That is necessary," he observes, "in the original and proper sense of the word, which is, or will be, notwithstanding all *supposable opposition*."* This does not imply, that in every case of common necessity, there is *actual* opposition of will. A man who has taken passage in a steam-boat, is under the necessity of being carried forward, by the motion of the vessel. But so far is he from being opposed to this necessity, that to have the benefit of this progress towards the place of his destination, is the very object for which he entered the boat. Yet opposition to the motion of a boat is *supposable*. There is nothing in the nature of the case, that renders the supposition absurd. A man may have been put on board against his will, to convey him to prison, or to a place of execution.

Edwards adverts to the extreme difficulty of bringing common minds to understand the term necessity, and other similar expressions, in such a sense as to exclude

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 3.

the notion of *supposable opposition of will*. In the common acceptance, "a thing is said to be necessary, when we can not help it, let us do what we will.—And we are said to be unable to do a thing, when our supposable desires and endeavors to do it are insufficient. We are accustomed, in the common use of language, to apply and understand these phrases in this sense. We grow up with such a habit; which by the daily use of these terms, in such a sense, from our childhood, becomes fixed and settled; so that the idea of a relation to a supposed will, desire, and endeavor of ours, is strongly connected with these terms, and naturally excited in our minds, whenever we hear the words used.—And if we use the words, *as terms of art*, in another sense, yet, unless we are exceeding circumspect and wary, we shall insensibly slide into the vulgar use of them, and so apply the words in a very inconsistent manner."

This common necessity he considers as either *general* or *particular*. "Things are said to be necessary *in general*, which are or will be, notwithstanding any supposable opposition *from us or others*, or from whatever quarter. But things are said to be necessary *to us*, which are or will be, notwithstanding all opposition supposable in the case *from us*. The same may be observed of the word *impossible*, and other such like terms.—As the word necessity, in its vulgar and common use, is relative, and has always reference to some supposable insufficient opposition; so when we speak of any thing as necessary *to us*, it is with relation to some supposable opposition of *our wills*, of some voluntary exertion or effort of ours to the contrary; for we do not properly make opposition to an event, any otherwise than as we *voluntarily* oppose

it.—When these terms *necessary, impossible, irresistible, unable, &c.* are used in cases wherein no opposition, or insufficient will or endeavor, is supposed, or can be supposed, but the very nature of the supposed case itself excludes and denies any such opposition, will, or endeavor; these terms are not then used in their proper signification, but quite beside their use in common speech.”

After having thus explained the *common* meaning of necessity, Edwards proceeds to a statement of the *philosophical* use of the term. “These terms *necessary, impossible, &c.* are often used by philosophers and metaphysicians, in a sense quite diverse from their common use and original signification; for they apply them to many cases in which no opposition is supposed or supposable.—*Metaphysical* or *philosophical* necessity is nothing different from their *certainty*. I speak not now of the certainty of *knowledge*, but the certainty that is in *things themselves*, which is the *foundation* of the certainty of the knowledge of them.” He then gives a formal definition of the term.

“*Philosophical necessity is really nothing else than the FULL AND FIXED CONNECTION between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be true.*” With respect to this definition, it is to be observed:—

First, that he uses the terms *philosophical* and *metaphysical* interchangeably, without any difference of signification. He calls the necessity of which he is speaking metaphysical or philosophical; evidently, because it is treated of by philosophers or metaphysicians. Other writers apply the terms separately and distinctively to different kinds of necessity. Edwards himself after-

wards makes a division of the general subject ; but does not designate the subdivisions by those terms respectively.

Further, *philosophical* necessity, as defined by Edwards, is not to be considered a *distinct species* from *common* necessity. It is rather a *genus*, in which the latter is included. When there is "the full and fixed connection, between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be true, then the thing affirmed in the proposition is necessary, in a philosophical sense, *whether any opposition, or contrary effort be supposed, or supposable, in the case or no.*" If there be this supposable opposition, the philosophical necessity is common necessity ; otherwise not. "*Full and fixed connection*" of things is, according to Edwards's definition, the essential quality which belongs to *all* necessity. In common necessity, there is the additional element of supposable opposition to the will ; by which it is distinguished, not from the genus philosophical necessity, but from *other species* of philosophical necessity.

Again, philosophical necessity, as defined by Edwards, is applicable to *any* proposition whatever, "which *affirms something to be true,*" when there is a "full and fixed connection between the subject and predicate of the proposition." It may affirm either the *existence* of a thing, or its *cause*, or the *connection* between the cause and the effect. The existence of the thing may be necessary ; it may proceed from a necessary cause ; and the connection between the thing and its cause may be necessary.

To the *first* of these, the existence of things, Edwards frequently makes the application of the term, in his In-

quiry on the Will. "When the subject and predicate of the proposition which affirms the *existence* of any thing, either substance, quality, act or circumstance, have a full and certain connection, then the existence or being of that thing is said to be necessary in a metaphysical sense. And in this sense, I use the word necessity, in the following discourse, when I endeavor to prove, that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty." He proceeds to specify, under distinct heads, some of the *grounds* of necessary existence. "The subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms existence of something, may have a full, fixed, and certain connection, several ways. (1.) They may have a full and perfect connection *in and of themselves*; because it may imply a contradiction, or gross absurdity, to suppose them not connected.—So it is necessary in its own nature, that two and two should be four; and it is necessary that all right lines drawn from the center of a circle to the circumference should be equal. (2.) The connection of the subject and predicate of a proposition, which affirms the existence of something, may be fixed and made certain, because the existence of that thing has *already come to pass*.—It is become impossible it should be otherwise than true, that such a thing has been."

The next head, that of *consequential* necessity, calls for very special attention, as it is this which occupies so prominent a place in almost every part of Edwards's book on the Will. "(3.) The subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be, may have a real and certain connection *consequentially*; and so the existence of the thing may be consequentially necessary; as it may be *surely and firmly connected* with something

else, that is necessary in one of the former respects." A sure and firm connection between volitions and antecedent causes or motives, is more frequently called necessity, by Edwards's opponents, than any thing else. In relation to his statement of consequential necessity, several important inquiries are presented to our consideration.

1. Does Edwards intend to apply the term necessary to the simple *existence* of things and events, or to the sure and firm *connection* between these and something else?

In the definition of *philosophical* necessity, he says, "When the subject and predicate of the proposition which affirms the *existence* of any thing, either substance, quality, act, or circumstance, have a full and certain connection, then the *existence* or being of that thing is said to be necessary, in a metaphysical sense. And in *this* sense, I use the word necessity, in the following discourse, when I endeavor to prove, that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty." And in the definition of *consequential* necessity, he says, "the *existence* of the thing may be consequentially necessary."

2. Is *simple existence* all that is *implied*, in President Edwards's application of the term necessary to events and things? Does he mean nothing more than this, that whatever will be, will be; the identical and useless proposition, that whatever is is, put in the future tense? Let us see. To recur to the definition of consequential necessity; "The existence of the thing may be consequentially necessary; as it may be surely and firmly *connected with something else*, that is necessary in one of the former respects. Things which are perfectly connected with

other things that are necessary, are necessary themselves, by a necessity of consequence. And here it may be observed, that all things which are *future*, or which will hereafter begin to be, which can be said to be necessary, are necessary *only* in this last way.—Therefore, the *only way* that any thing that is to come to pass hereafter, is or *can be* necessary, is by a *connection* with something that is necessary in its own nature, or something that already is, or has been; so that *the one being supposed, the other certainly follows*. And this is also the only way in which any *effect* or *event*, or any thing whatsoever that ever has had, or will have, a beginning, has come into being necessarily, or will hereafter necessarily exist. And therefore *this* is the necessity which especially belongs to controversies about the acts of the will.” Observe here the expressions, could *come to pass* necessarily,—and, *come into being* necessarily. Necessity is applied not only to their existence, but to their *coming* into being.*

3. *What is that something else, with which necessary events are surely and firmly connected? Can it be the divine foreknowledge only, that is intended by Edwards? Whatever will actually take place, God perfectly foresees. Whatever will not take place, he does not foresee as a reality. His foreknowledge of future events, there-*

* “The original meaning of the word necessity appears to have been, an intimate connection, or conjunction; as is indicated both by its etymology, as if from *necto*, and by the use of *necessitudo*, and *necessarius*, to denote close intimacy. Hence food is called necessary to life, because of the connection between the two; life never continues *without*, that is, *separately* from food. And on the same principle, we speak of the necessity of a *cause* to its *effect*.” Whately’s Appendix to Archbishop King’s Discourse on Predestination, p. 83.

fore, is exactly commensurate with the nature and number of the events; so that, in the language of Edwards, "the one being supposed, the others certainly follow." Some of the opponents* of Edwards, while they admit, that God perfectly foreknows all the volitions of his creatures, yet deny that this foreknowledge implies the necessity of the volitions. But Edwards has undertaken "to shew how it follows, from God's infallible prescience of the acts of the will of moral agents, that these events are *necessary*, with a necessity of *connection* or consequence."† "It is very evident," he says, "with regard to a thing whose existence is *infallibly and indissolubly connected* with something which already hath or has had existence, the existence of that thing is necessary."—"Those things which are indissolubly connected with other things that are necessary, are themselves necessary."—"If there be a full, certain, and infallible foreknowledge of the future existence of the volitions of moral agents, then there is a certain, infallible, indissoluble *connection between those events and that foreknowledge*."

4. Is a connection between volitions and God's foreknowledge, *all* that is implied in Edwards's view of consequential necessity? Are they surely and infallibly connected with nothing else?

In his definition of *moral* necessity, which is consequential necessity applied to volitions, he says, "some-

* For brevity's sake, I use the term *opponents* to include not only those whose writings Edwards undertook to answer, and those, on the other hand, who wrote in reply to him; but all who hold opinions opposed to the principles which he maintains.

† Freedom of the Will, Part II, Sec. 12.

times by moral necessity is meant that necessity of connection and consequence which arises from such *moral causes*, as the strength of inclination, or motives ; and the *connection* which there is, in many cases, between *these* and such certain *volitions* and actions. And it is in this sense, that I use the phrase moral necessity, in the following discourse." Here, the moral causes with which volitions are said to be connected, are not God's foreknowledge, but the strength of *inclination* or *motives*. "Moral necessity," he observes, "may be as *absolute* as natural necessity. That is, the effect may be as *perfectly connected with its moral cause*, as a natural necessary effect is, with its natural cause.—The motive presented may be so powerful, that the act of the will may be *certainly and indissolubly connected* therewith.—As therefore, it must be allowed, that there may be such a thing as a *sure and perfect connection between moral causes and effects*, so this only is what I call by the name of moral necessity.*—When I speak of connection of causes and effects, I have respect to *moral* causes, as well as those that are natural, in distinction from them. Moral causes may be causes, in *as proper a sense* as any causes whatsoever ; may have *as real an influence*, and may as truly be the ground and reason of an event's coming to pass."†

It would seem, that there is no more impropriety in applying the phrase moral necessity to the *existence* of volitions, than to the *connection* between these and their causes. In the one case, we call those volitions necessary which are rendered so, by a sure connection with

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 4.

† Part II, Sec. 3.

their causes; in the other, we apply the term to that sure connection itself which renders the volitions necessary. According to the views of Edwards, the one always *implies* the other. He holds not only to a moral necessity of *volitions*, but to a moral necessity of the *connection* of volitions with their causes.

The younger Edwards, whose object, in his *Essays on Liberty and Necessity*, is to explain and defend the opinions of his father, in his work on the Will, appears to apply the phrase in both ways. "Moral necessity," he says, "is the certain or necessary *connection* between moral *causes* and moral effects." A few pages farther on, he says, by moral necessity, "I mean all necessity or previous certainty of the *volitions* or voluntary action of a rational being, whatever be the cause or influence by which that necessity is established, or the volition brought into existence." Here, it would seem, that the term necessity is applied to volition itself. Again, "*All necessity of moral acts* is moral necessity."* He repeatedly asserts, that certainty of moral actions is moral necessity;—"all the moral necessity for which we plead."† He should have said, "all the moral necessity of volitions themselves;" for he certainly held also to a moral necessity of the *connection* between volitions and their causes. He was here arguing with an opponent, Dr. Samuel West, who admitted the divine foreknowledge of volitions; though he denied the inference which President Edwards had drawn from this. Dr. Edwards was endeavoring to shew, that what Dr. West admitted, implied a moral necessity of the volitions themselves; if not

* Page 6, 13, 87.

† Page 156, 158, 160, 166, 168.

a necessity of the connection between the volitions and their causes.

5. This leads to the inquiry, whether by necessity, particularly moral necessity, Edwards means any thing more than *certainty*. "Certainty," says Dr. Edwards, "with respect to moral actions, is moral necessity."* But the term necessity is here applied to what is called *certainty in things*, that is, to the *reality* of things and their relations; and not to the mere *knowledge* of this reality. "Metaphysical or philosophical necessity," says President Edwards, "is nothing different from their certainty. I speak not now of the certainty of knowledge, but the certainty that is in things themselves, which is the foundation of the certainty of the knowledge of them.—There must be a certainty in things, before they are certainly known. For certainty of knowledge is nothing else but knowing or discerning the certainty there is in the things themselves which are known."†

"No doubt," says Dr. Edwards, "knowledge in the Deity is the same thing with *subjective* certainty, or certain knowledge; but it is not the same with *objective* certainty, or the truth which is the object of the divine knowledge."‡

These writers may have been the more cautious to distinguish certainty of knowledge from what they call certainty in things, as the former is the original and etymological meaning of the term certainty; though the latter signification has come into frequent use.

It is farther to be observed, that there is a different *application* of the expression moral necessity, according as

* Essays, p. 145, 146.

† Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 3, and Part II, Sec. 12.

‡ Essays, p. 151.

certainty is predicated of *volitions themselves*, or of the *connection* between the volitions and their causes. The certain future *existence* of volitions is moral necessity of these volitions; and the certain *connection* between volitions and their causes is moral necessity of this connection.

When President Edwards, speaking of "a sure and perfect connection between moral causes and effects," says, "this *only* is what I call by the name of moral necessity," it appears that the limiting word only refers to the qualifying terms *sure* and *perfect*; it being his meaning, that he would give the name of moral necessity to no *other* connection between moral causes and effects, but that which is sure and perfect. For the object of the whole paragraph from which this quotation is taken is to shew, that "moral necessity may be as *absolute* as natural necessity." But in his definition of philosophical necessity, of which moral necessity is a branch, he says, "When the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms the *existence* of any thing, either substance, quality, *act*, or circumstance, have a full and certain connection, then the existence or being of that thing is said to be necessary, in a metaphysical sense. And in this sense, I use the word necessity, in the following discourse, when I endeavor to prove, that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty." Here, the necessity which is spoken of as not inconsistent with liberty, is represented as belonging to the *existence* of that which is said to be necessary.

When Dr. Edwards speaks of moral necessity as the "bare *certainty* of a moral action," he does not intend to imply, that the action is not certainly connected with

its cause, for he says, "It is equally absurd to imagine that an event may become *future* without a cause, as that it may come *into existence* without a cause." And his first definition of moral necessity is, "the certain and necessary *connection* between moral causes and moral effects."*

"*Impossibility*," says Edwards, "is the same as *negative* necessity; or a necessity that a thing *should not be*." Of course, it has all the variety of significations, which the positive term necessity has. Thus, things may be said to be impossible, either with a *general*, or a *particular* impossibility; according as they are impossible, *all* things considered, or in reference only to a particular person, time, or place. Things may be impossi-

* Essays, p. 6, 156, 166. "Our attention being most called to the connection of such things as we may in vain wish to separate, the word necessary hence comes to be *limited*, and *especially* applied to cases of *compulsion*; to events which take place either against one's will, or, at least, independent of it; to things, in short, which we have no power to prevent if we would, or to prevent, without submitting to a worse alternative.—In this sense it is, that necessity is pleaded and allowed, as an *excuse* for doing what would otherwise be blamable. But in the primitive and wider sense of the word, it may be applied to cases where there is *no compulsion*, nor opposition to the will.—From confounding together the *primary* and wider sense of necessity, and that *secondary* and more limited sense, which implies compulsion or unwillingness, have arisen most of the disputes and perplexities that have prevailed on this subject.—There is also another use of the word necessary, and of those connected with it. For, as it has been above remarked, that our attention is especially called to those connections which we may vainly endeavor to destroy; so our attention is particularly called to those connections which we *understand*, or at least, *are aware of*.—Hence arises the confusion of *certainty* with necessity; the former of which belongs properly to our own *minds*, and is thence, in a transferred sense, applied to the *objects* themselves." Whately's Appendix to King's Discourse, p. 85, 86, 88.

ble *in their own nature* ; for example, two straight lines can not inclose a space ; or they may be *consequently* impossible. While the planets are moved in their orbits, by any cause, it is impossible they should remain at rest. That may be *morally* impossible, which is not *naturally* impossible, in Edwards's sense of the terms.

CONTINGENCE.

A term which, in metaphysical discussion, is frequently used to express the absence of necessity, is *contingence*. President Edwards has explained the difference between two significations of the word ; according to one of which, an event is said to be contingent, when it takes place without any *known* or *observed* cause ; according to the other, a contingent event is supposed to have *no cause whatever*, with which it has a fixed and certain connection. With the latter meaning, he frequently uses the term in his Inquiry on the Will. There is also a *third* sense in which he occasionally employs it, especially in the section on the foreknowledge of God, to signify that which is *opposed to certainty* ; to the certain future existence of an event. In his own view, indeed, the second of these three meanings implies the last ; an event being always considered by him as uncertain, if it has no fixed connection with a cause. But according to some of his opponents, volitions may have no dependence on a cause for being as they are, and yet may be certainly foreknown. In arguing with these, he has occasion to speak of contingent events as opposed not only to connection with a cause, but also to the certain futurity of the events.

These are the meanings with which *Edwards* uses the term contingent. But significations still different, and in some respects opposite, are given it by other writers. All created things are said to be contingent, because they are not self-existent, but dependent on the will of the Creator. If his purpose had been different, *they* might have been different, or might not have existed at all. Things depending on *human* volitions are also said to be contingent, as they might have been different, if the volitions had been different. In this sense, the word contingent, instead of implying the negation of a cause, is used for the very purpose of expressing dependence on a cause.

Again, it is used, by some writers, to denote a peculiarity in the *nature* of the cause, and of the effects which proceed from it. It is a current opinion, that the same cause, in the same circumstances, will be uniformly followed with the same effects. Though this is admitted to be correct with respect to *common* causes, yet it is claimed, by some philosophers, that the *will*, or the mind in willing, is different from all other causes ; that it forms an *exception* to the great law of causation ; and that the same agent, continuing in precisely the same circumstances, and under the same influence, of every kind, puts forth various, and even *opposite* volitions. Such a cause, if any such there be, is called a *contingent* cause ; and the volitions proceeding from it are also said to be contingent, as neither the nature of the cause, nor any influence under which it acts, determines what the volitions will be. In the philosophical use of the term contingency, it generally implies opposition to some kind of necessity. But as there are various mean-

ings of necessity, there are corresponding varieties in the signification of contingency. It is used to signify, that a thing is not necessary *in its own nature*. It is also used, in contradistinction from *consequential* necessity, to denote that which is not dependent on a cause. This is analogous to its use in *common life*, to signify that something has taken place, without a *known* or *observed* cause. When the term necessity is applied to *certain existence* merely, without reference to a cause, the corresponding meaning of contingency is uncertainty.

SECTION III.

NATURAL AND MORAL NECESSITY.

Moral causes and motives—Is the distinction between natural and moral necessity a distinction without a difference?—By moral necessity, Edwards means a *sure and perfect* connection—Moral necessity is inconsistent with *entire opposition* of will—Common necessity admits of opposition from the will—Moral necessity relates to the influence which *gives direction* to acts of choice—Natural necessity does not always imply *actual* opposition of the will—Moral necessity does not exclude *all* opposition—It is *real* necessity.

PRESIDENT EDWARDS makes a distinction, which he considers an important one, between *natural* and *moral* necessity. "Sometimes, by moral necessity is meant that necessity of connection and consequence which arises from such *moral causes* as the strength of inclination or motives, and the connection which there is, in many cases, between these and such certain volitions and actions. And it is in this sense, that I use the phrase moral necessity, in the following discourse. By *natural necessity*, as applied to men, I mean such necessity as men are under, through the force of natural causes, as distinguished from what are called moral causes, such as habits and dispositions of the heart, and moral motives and inducements."*

In these definitions, the expressions *moral causes* and *moral motives*, are evidently intended to mean the causes and motives of moral *effects*, that is, of right or wrong

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 4.

volitions, though the causes and motives themselves may not always have a moral character. "The cause with which the effect is connected," says the writer, is "either some previous disposition, or some motive exhibited to the understanding." Now motives presented to the understanding, are not always right or wrong in themselves. They may be external, material objects, which have no moral quality. It is true, that one wrong act of will *may be* the motive, or part of the motive, to another wrong act. If a man has committed theft, he may be guilty of falsehood, to prevent detection. The theft may be denominated moral, both as being wrong in itself, and also as being the motive to another wrong act. But the motive to *every* volition, can not be moral in the sense of being itself a volition, as Edwards has abundantly shown. The cause of *all* sin can not be itself sin. Dr. Edwards defines moral necessity to be "the certain or necessary connection between moral causes and moral effects." Yet he says, that by moral necessity, he means "all necessity or previous certainty of the volition or voluntary action of a rational being, *whatever be the cause or influence* by which that necessity is established, or the volition brought into existence ;"* plainly shewing, that by a moral cause he means *any* cause of moral effects.

It has sometimes been said, that President Edwards's distinction between natural and moral necessity, is a *distinction without a difference*. If there is any difference between them, what is it? It can not be a *total* difference ; a difference in *all* the properties and relations. Between two species of the same genus, there must be,

* *Essays*, p. 6, 13.

at least, *one* point of agreement. If a "full and fixed connection" of things, enters into the definition of *all* necessity, this can not be the ground of difference between one kind of necessity and another. That can not be moral necessity, which is no necessity at all. "Moral necessity," says Edwards, "may be as *absolute* as natural necessity; that is, the effect may be as perfectly connected with its moral cause, as a natural necessary effect is with its natural cause. Whether the will, in *every* case, is necessarily determined by the strongest motive;—yet I suppose none will deny, but that in *some* cases, a previous bias and inclination, or the motive presented, may be so powerful, that the act of the will may be *certainly* and *indissolubly* connected therewith." "As, therefore, it must be allowed, that there may be such a thing as a *sure* and *perfect* connection between moral causes and effects, so this only is what I call by the name of *moral necessity*." "Moral necessity," says the younger Edwards, "is the real and *certain* connection between some moral action and its cause; and there is no moral *necessity* in the case, unless the connection be real and absolutely certain, so as to *ensure* the existence of the action."* President Edwards observes, that moral necessity *sometimes* signifies much the same as a high degree of *probability*; an *apparent* connection of things. But this is not the sense in which he proposes to use the phrase in his book. According to him, moral necessity is philosophical necessity applied to *acts of the will*. The difference between this and natural necessity does not, in his view, imply that the one is not owing to *the nature of things*, as well

* *Essays*, p. 15.

as the other. "When I use this distinction of natural and moral necessity, I would not be understood to suppose, that if any thing comes to pass by the former kind of necessity, the *nature* of things is not concerned in it, as well as in the latter. I do not mean to determine, that when a moral habit or motive is so strong that the act of the will infallibly follows, this is not owing to the nature of things."

The real distinction, according to Edwards, between moral and natural necessity, considered as consequential, is this, that the former is a connection which renders *volitions* certain; while the latter is a connection which renders *other* effects certain. The *motives* also, by which the mind is induced to will in a particular way, may be widely different from the causes of natural effects. Though one cause can not be unlike another, in the very property which is common and essential to *all* causes, yet the *manner* in which motives incline the will, may differ greatly from the operations by which other effects are produced. Men are not persuaded to resolve and act, by the same impelling force as that by which a ship is carried forward on the water. The power of temptation is not of the same nature as the momentum of machinery. The positions and movements of an army, are not regulated in the same way in which the hours and minutes are measured off by a watch or a clock. But although there may be a wide difference between natural and moral necessity in the mode of operation, yet according to Edwards, "the effect may be as *perfectly connected* with its moral cause, as a natural necessary effect is with its natural cause." "Between these two kinds of necessity, there is a distinction or differ-

ence that is very important in its consequences. Which difference does not lie so much in the nature of the *connection*, as in the two *terms connected*. The *cause* with which the effect is connected, is of a particular kind, viz. that which is of a moral nature ; either some previous habitual disposition, or some motive exhibited to the understanding. And the *effect* is also of a particular kind, being likewise of a moral nature ; consisting in some inclination or volition of the soul, or voluntary action."

One difference between natural and moral necessity which is important in its practical applications is this, that there can not be *entire opposition* between the latter and that act of the will to which the necessity relates. "No such opposition or contrary will and endeavor," says Edwards, "is supposable, in the case of moral necessity, which is a certainty of the inclination and will itself; which does not admit of the supposition of a will to oppose and resist it. For it is absurd to suppose the same individual will to oppose itself in its present act; or the present choice to be opposite to and resisting present choice; as absurd as it is to talk of two contrary motions in the same moving body at the same time." It may perhaps be thought, that although there is an absurdity in supposing a present act or state of the will to be opposed to *itself*, yet that it may be opposed to the *influence* by which it is rendered certain. But it is to be considered, that the only way in which influence can render a volition certain, is by securing the *consent* of the will; by inducing it to yield a *compliance* with the motives presented. A man can not, at the time, be entirely opposed to that with which he is, on the whole,

the most pleased. In view of rival interests, there may be contending emotions of various degrees of strength ; but the *prevailing* inclination can not be opposed to the very influence which causes it to prevail. The man who yields to a particular temptation can not, at the moment of yielding, be fully opposed to its persuasive power. He is neither opposed to willing as he does, nor to that which *induces* him to will thus. He may, at one time, comply with influence, which, at another time, he effectually resists. But, in neither case, is the predominant inclination opposed to the motives which induce him to will as he does. The intemperate man may earnestly resolve, that *in future* he will withstand the solicitations of appetite ; yet, when in the hour of trial he breaks his resolution, he is not wholly opposed to the influence which has persuaded him to yield.

But *natural* necessity may be entirely opposed to a man's will. He may be *compelled* to those external actions to which he is altogether averse ; or he may be *restrained* from doing that which he is very desirous to do. That branch of natural necessity which Edwards speaks of as *common* necessity is, according to him, in all cases, of such a nature as to admit of opposition from the will. "The terms *necessary, impossible, irresistible, &c.*, in *common speech*, and in their most proper sense, are always relative, having reference to some supposable voluntary opposition or endeavor that is insufficient." But *philosophical* natural necessity is a phrase of so broad a signification that it includes not only common necessity, but all other kinds except moral necessity, so that it either *may or may not be* opposed to the will. In this sense, a man may be said to be under a

necessity of remaining in prison, though he is *willingly* confined there, to escape the violence of an exasperated mob. We often rejoice in the necessary flight of time, when it carries us forward to some anticipated scene of enjoyment.

The necessity in these and similar cases, relates to something *external* to the will. But the inquiry may be made, what is natural necessity in relation to the will itself? It is the necessity to which a man is commonly subject of willing *either one way or another*. He can not cease to will as long as he retains his reason, and objects are presented to his choice. But the influence which gives a particular *direction* to acts of the will, belongs to *moral* necessity. This includes *all* the considerations which induce the mind to will one way rather than another. Nothing is left to be referred to *natural* necessity. That relates to effects which are *not* volitions; or if predicated of the will at all, implies that a man can not avoid willing; that he is under a necessity of willing one way or another. By moral necessity, says the younger Edwards, "I mean *all* necessity or previous certainty of the volition or voluntary action of a rational being, whatever be the cause or influence by which that necessity is established, or the volition brought into existence, and however great and efficacious that influence be."

In discriminating between natural and moral necessity, it is not sufficient to say, in general terms, that in the one case there is *opposition of will*, and in the other no opposition whatever. *Natural* necessity, according to Edwards, does not always imply that there is *actual* opposition of will, though it implies that opposition is

supposable; the nature of the case admits it. On the other hand, *moral* necessity does not exclude *all* opposition whatever. There may be opposition between different affections of the same mind, while the *predominant* affection is morally necessary. A man's will *at one time* may be opposed to his will at another time. There may be a struggle between present gratification and the prospect of future good; between self-indulgence and a regard to the welfare of others. But the *prevailing* inclination can not be, at the same time, opposed to itself or to the motives with which it complies. The very nature of the case renders the supposition absurd.

The amount of the objection which is most commonly brought against Edwards's view of moral necessity is, that with all his explanations, he makes it out to be *real* necessity; not a high degree of probability; not an unmeaning figure of speech; but an infallible connection between moral acts and their causes. His opponents insist upon it, that his distinction between moral and natural necessity, is a distinction without a difference; in other words, that his moral necessity *is* natural necessity, because both have the common property which is essential to *all* necessity—infallible certainty. In his definition of *motive*, he appears to have conceded *too little* to the views of his opponents; while in the use of the word *necessity*, he has yielded *too much* to their perverted application of the term.

SECTION IV.

NATURAL AND MORAL INABILITY.

The distinction not always understood by those who use the terms—Moral inability lies in the predominant *inclination* of the agent—It may be *previous* to the act of choice—Inability in relation to *external conduct*, to *imperative* volitions, and to *emotions*—*Natural* inability with respect to *external actions*, and with respect to the *will*—Query with respect to the *propriety* of Edwards's use of the terms necessity, inability, &c.—They are liable to misapprehension—Practical application of the distinction between natural and moral inability—Is moral inability *natural* to man?—*Broad* and *limited* meaning of the terms ability, inability, &c.—Scriptural usage—Can and can not—Language of common life.

AFTER giving an explanation of natural and moral necessity, Edwards states the distinction between natural and moral *inability*. Since his day, this distinction has become familiar, in terms at least, to most of the divines of New England. But it is by no means certain, that all who copy the *language* of Edwards, on this subject, give it a *meaning* according with his own explanation. Some may retain the phraseology, while they give it a very different interpretation. On the other hand, some may adopt substantially the same distinction; but think proper to express it in different terms. He may have left a degree of obscurity, in his explanation of inability, to avoid the repetition of what he had stated, on the kindred subject of necessity. "What has been said of natural and moral necessity," he observes, "may serve to explain what is intended by natural and moral inabil-

ity." This reference may answer the purpose, with those who read his work in regular course. But as necessity is a less frequent subject of discussion than inability, many may consult the pages which treat of the latter, without availing themselves of the light to be derived from the preceding explanations of the former.

"Moral inability," says Edwards, "consists either in the *want of inclination* ; or the strength of a *contrary inclination* ; or the want of sufficient *motives* in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent *motives to the contrary*. Or both these may be resolved into one ; and it may be said in one word, that moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination. For when a person is unable to will or choose such a thing, through a defect of motives, or prevalence of contrary motives, it is the same thing as his being unable through the want of an inclination, or the prevalence of a contrary inclination, in such circumstances, and under the influence of such views."*

According to this definition, moral inability may be considered as lying wholly in the *inclination* of the agent ; in that which *inclines* him to act in one way rather than another. More definitely, it is either the want of inclination to a particular act or kind of acts, or a positive inclination to the contrary. *Motives* also have a place in the statement. But motive, according to Edwards, is "that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition ;" in other words, that which *inclines* the agent to will as he does.

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 4.

It is to be observed, that the term *inclination* is frequently used to signify the actual *state* of the will, the *direction* which it takes, without referring to the influence by which it is *induced* to decide as it does. The word has a similar application, in material things. The inclination of the ecliptic to the equator, is the angle made by the two circles, whatever may be the cause of this obliquity. By the inclination of the magnetic needle, is meant the actual direction which it takes; and not the influence which gives it this position. But when applied to voluntary agency, the term is also frequently used to signify that which inclines the will to a particular volition. "By *inclination*, disposition, or bias," says the younger Edwards, "I mean something *distinct* from volition." Inclination may be understood in *both* senses, in Edwards's definition of moral inability, according as it relates to the determination of external conduct, or of acts of the will itself. A man's moral inability to labor, is his unwillingness to labor. His moral inability to *will* to labor, is his want of sufficient inducement to excite him thus to will. President Edwards, in the illustrations which follow his definitions, gives examples of both kinds. "A drunkard may be unable to forbear taking of strong drink." "A child may be unable to be *willing* to kill his father." "A strong habit of virtue, may cause a moral inability to *love* wickedness."

By *inclination*, in Edwards's definition of moral inability, he evidently means the *predominant* inclination. A man may have *some* inclination, that is, some inducement, to that which he is, nevertheless, morally unable to will, because he is under a *stronger* inducement, a

controlling inclination, to the contrary. The slothful man may have many motives for active exertion, while he is under a more powerful propensity to remain idle. "Moral inability," says Edwards, "consists either in a *want* of inclination, or the strength of a *contrary* inclination;" that is, the inability to will in a particular way, is either the want of inclination to will in that way, or the strength of inclination to will the contrary. A man's moral inability to *do his duty*, lies either in that which tends to give a *wrong* direction to his actions, or in the *want* of that which would give them a *right* direction. If we are speaking of *imperative* acts of will, inclination must refer to preceding emotions, affections, or purposes. But if inability is predicated of the *emotions themselves*, the want of inclination lies farther back, in the previous state of mind, or its relation to external objects.

When Edwards speaks of a man's being "unable to choose or will such a thing," through "the prevalence of a *contrary inclination*;" he is not to be understood as intending merely to affirm, that it is impossible for any one to will in opposite directions *at the same time*. This is, indeed, implied in his statement. But this is *not all*. In a parallel passage, he speaks of the "preponderancy of the inclination" as being "*previous* to the act of choice." A man is morally unable to will in a particular way, because his inclination leads him to will in the opposite way, and he can not have contrary volitions at the same time. The term inability commonly relates to something *preceding* that which we are said to be unable to perform. It is *consequential* inability, the want of power over *future* acts of the will, with which

we are principally concerned, in discussions respecting accountable agency. A man's moral inability to do right, is not his mere failure to do right ; it is something which *prevents* him from doing right. Some men are unable to serve God, not simply because they can not serve two masters at the same time ; but because, in addition to this, they have a predominant inclination to serve Mammon.

It is important to mark the difference, in the application of consequential inability to *external conduct*, to *imperative volitions*, and to *emotions*. This difference comes into view, in examining the question, whether moral inability is any *excuse* for the neglect of our duty. In giving a negative answer to the inquiry, it is common to assign *this* as a reason, that our inability is the very thing in which our guilt consists, the want of a right inclination. That can not, it is said, be an excuse for sin, which is itself sin. This is very correct, when the application is to *external conduct*. The reason why a man does not perform his duty, is because he *will not* ; and in this consists his guilt. The same reason may be given, in the case of *purposes*, and of *imperative volitions*. These are wrong, because the affections on which they depend are wrong. But is the inability which prevents affections themselves from being right, to be considered as sin ? If we admit that it is, yet we may trace back the series of antecedents and consequents, till we come to the *first* sin of which a man is guilty. A previous inability to avoid *this*, can not have been itself sin. Some other reason must be given, to shew why the man is not to be exonerated from the charge of guilt.

NATURAL INABILITY.

Some may, perhaps, be ready to ask, if President Edwards has comprised, under the head of *moral* inability, all that want of influence, or that contrary influence, which inclines the will in one direction rather than another, what place has he left for *natural* inability? In answer to this, it may be observed, that there are *some* qualifications which are necessary for acting or willing in *any* direction ; some prerequisites which are *common* to right and wrong action. These belong to what Edwards denominates natural ability. "We are said to be *naturally* unable to do a thing, when we can not do it if we will, because what is most commonly called nature does not allow of it, or because of some impeding defect or obstacle that is extrinsic to the will, either in the faculty of understanding, constitution of body, or external objects." "All inability that excuses," he observes, "may be resolved into *one thing*, namely, want of natural capacity or strength ; either capacity of understanding, or external strength."*

Natural inability, with respect to external actions is, according to Edwards, an inability of *doing as we will* ; a "want of connection" between these actions and the will. Natural inability with respect to *the will itself*, is such a want of capacity or opportunity of knowledge, as prevents us, in the case supposed, from willing *either right or wrong*. A man can neither choose nor refuse, love nor hate, an object of which he knows nothing.

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 4 ; Part III, Sec. 4.

He who has never heard of the offers of the gospel, can neither embrace nor reject them. A man's *natural* power of walking, is his power of going *in any direction*, according as his will may determine. His *moral* power of walking, is his *inclination* to go in some *particular* direction. His natural power of *willing*, is his capacity of willing *this way or another*, according to the influence of motives. His moral power of willing, is the influence which determines him to will in one way *rather* than in another. As his natural ability to walk, does not imply, that he ever walks *against* his will, or without willing at all; so his ability to *will*, does not imply, that he ever wills against all motives, or without any motives. A *natural* ability of speaking the truth, is an equal capacity of speaking both truth and falsehood. But a man may have a *moral* ability, that is, a predominant inclination to speak the truth, when he has *no* inclination, that is, no moral ability to speak falsehood. A natural ability of moving the hand, is a power of moving it up or down, of turning it to the right or left. A moral ability of moving the hand, is an inclination to move it in some particular direction. The *difference*, then, between a man's natural and moral inability of will is this, that the one implies, that he can not will at all, with respect to a given object; the other, that he can not will contrary to his predominant inclination. There is also an important *practical* difference, which has already been noticed in the case of natural and moral *necessity*. Between *natural* inability and the state of the will, there may be *entire opposition*. A man may be utterly opposed to the disease which confines him to his bed.

But he can not be wholly opposed to that prevailing influence with which his will complies.

I have endeavored to state correctly the distinction which President Edwards has made, between natural and moral necessity, and between natural and moral inability. We may admit the reality and importance of the *distinction*; and yet have doubts with respect to the propriety of the *terms* which he has adopted, in explaining this subject. He has not *originated* the use of these terms. Speaking of natural and moral inability, he says, "These are the names that these two kinds of necessity have *usually* been called by; and they must be distinguished by some names or other; for there is a distinction between them, that is very important in its consequences." Having explained "the original and common use of the words *unable*, and inability," he adds, "these terms are often used by philosophers and divines, especially writers on controversies about free-will, in a *quite different*, and far more extensive sense." Still, it may be doubted, whether injury has not been done to the cause of truth, by the general currency which the sanction of his name has given to this philosophical phraseology, among those who never take the pains to inform themselves of his cautious definitions and explanations. The nature of the investigation upon which he had entered, required, indeed, that he should avoid the common error of disputants, in giving their *own* meaning *exclusively* to the leading terms in the discussion; and disregarding the sense in which they are understood, by writers on the opposite side. How are you to meet the arguments of a man who gives to the words and phrases in which his

reasoning is expressed, a meaning very different from the signification which you consider as proper. You may rebuke him, for his unwarrantable deviation from the customary use of these expressions. But this is not replying to his *arguments*. You may interpret his language, according to your own views of propriety. But this will only give him an opportunity to charge you with misrepresenting his statements, and aiming your weapons at a phantom of your own creation. The only way to confute him, is to direct your arguments against his *meaning*; and this you must endeavor to obtain, from his own definitions and explanations, and the construction given to the principal terms, by the connection in which they are placed. Edwards has gone upon this plan, in treating of philosophical necessity. He has conceded to his opponents their own phraseology; discriminating, however, between the various senses in which the same word is used; and cautiously guarding against the common sophistry of substituting one meaning for another, in different parts of the argument.

Had he gone no farther, we should have had no reason to question the propriety of his use of the words necessity, inability, &c. But he has so interwoven them into the whole texture of his work, as to appear to give his *approbation* of the philosophical meaning of these terms. He not only says that they "are often used by philosophers and metaphysicians, in a sense quite diverse from their common use and original signification;" but in stating his *own* opinions, he frequently adopts the same technical phraseology. He would probably have endeavored to guard more effectually against a misapplication of his "terms of art," if he had foreseen all the confusion

which they have wrought, by their general circulation, among those who have no pretensions to any acquaintance with philosophy, beyond their use of a few such expressions. He was not altogether insensible, however, of the impropriety and the danger of giving a general currency to terms so defined and applied, as to be extremely liable to misapprehension and perversion. "I have largely declared," he says, "that the connection between antecedent things and consequent ones, which takes place with regard to the acts of men's wills, which is called moral necessity, is called by the name of necessity *improperly*;—and that such a necessity as attends the acts of men's wills, is more properly called *certainly* than necessity." "When these terms *necessary, impossible, irresistible, unable, &c.* are used in cases wherein no opposition, or insufficient will or endeavor, is supposed, or can be supposed, but the very nature of the supposed case itself excludes, and denies, any such opposition, will, or endeavor; these terms are not then used in their *proper signification*, but quite beside their use in common speech." "No inability whatsoever which is merely moral, is *properly* called by the name of inability."^{*}

In reference to the *danger of misapprehension*, after observing that the word necessity, in its vulgar and common use is relative, and has always reference to some supposable, insufficient opposition, &c. he adds, "we are accustomed, in the common use of language, to apply and understand these phrases in this sense; we grow up with such a habit; which, by the daily use of

^{*} Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 3; Part III, Sec. 4, Letter to a Minister in Scotland.

these terms in such a sense from our childhood, becomes fixed and settled ; so that the idea of a relation to a supposed will, desire, and endeavor of ours, is strongly connected with these terms, and naturally excited in our minds whenever we hear the words used." "And if we use the words as terms of art in another sense, yet, unless we are exceeding circumspect and wary, we shall insensibly slide into the vulgar use of them, and so apply the words in a very inconsistent manner. This habitual connection of ideas will deceive and confound us in our reasonings and discourses, wherein we pretend to use these terms in that manner as terms of art." "There is a grand illusion in the pretended demonstration of Arminians from common sense. The main strength of all these demonstrations, lies in that prejudice that arises through the *insensible change* of the use and meaning of such terms as *liberty, able, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable, invincible, action, &c.* from their original and vulgar sense, to a *metaphysical* sense entirely diverse."* To enable us to judge for ourselves whether there is really such an illusion arising from the use of these terms, and if there be, to bring it distinctly into view, we must endeavor to detect the various meanings concealed under the ambiguous expressions. In doing this, we may use, for the occasion, the language of metaphysical dialectics, without attempting to apply it to the common intercourse of life, or to illustrations of practical duty.

The liability to misapprehension, in inquiries on this subject, is not removed by merely making the distinction between *natural* and *moral* necessity, natural and

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 3 ; Part III, Sec. 4.

moral inability, &c. The design of Edwards in making this distinction, is evidently to keep in view two most important truths: First, that there is something in the nature of man, and in the circumstances in which he is placed, which will, in the present life, *certainly prevent* both saints and sinners from yielding perfect obedience to the will of God. Secondly, that this inability, if it is proper to call it inability, is of such a kind that it furnishes *no excuse* for disobedience. These truths taken together, the unrenewed sinner has a settled unwillingness to admit. He will either believe that he is under no inability of any kind to comply with the demands of the law and the gospel; that he has full power to obey when he chooses, and power to *choose* to obey whenever he may find it convenient: or, if driven from this ground, he will plead that he has a valid *excuse* for failing to obey; that his ability and his obligation are commensurate. He will endeavor, in this way, to relieve himself from the reproaches of conscience, charging him with exposure to perdition, for the want of that which nothing short of the renewing grace of God will ever supply. And it is to be feared that many professing Christians cherish the same erroneous view, as an apology for not being *perfect* in holiness. It has been thought that these pleas may be cut off, by distinguishing between that kind of inability which releases from obligation, and that which is no excuse for disobedience. But many intelligent divines maintain, that what Edwards calls moral inability, is *natural* inability; while others affirm that it is *no* inability. The latter consider it to be improper to give the same name to that intellectual capacity and knowledge without which a man could not

will *either* right or wrong, and to that external and internal influence which inclines him to will one way *rather* than another. They object, especially, to the practice of applying the term ability to obedience itself, and inability to disobedience; confounding, in their view, the effect with its cause.

The great objection to the use of the terms moral and natural inability in *contrast* with each other is, that an impression is made on a large portion of readers, that the distinction thus stated implies that *moral* inability is *not natural* to man; that it does not depend upon his own nature, and the nature of things around him. This, however, was very far from being intended by President Edwards. "I do not mean to determine," he says, "that when a moral habit or motive is so strong that the act of the will infallibly follows, this is not owing to the *nature of things*." "I suppose none will deny but that choice, in many cases, arises from nature as truly as other events." It is much to be regretted that some less ambiguous terms have not been employed to mark the distinction between the two kinds of inability.

Some part of the obscurity attending the consideration of this subject, appears to be owing to the fact that the inability of *doing* right, and the inability of *willing* right, are comprised in the same definition. While, in some respects, they are alike, in others they are different. The moral inability of *doing* right lies in the want of right acts of will. This is sin. That which prevents the acts of the will itself from being right, *may be*, in some instances, the nature of its preceding acts. But this can not always be the case. A man's *first* volitions can not be prevented from being right by preceding volitions of his.

The controversies which have long agitated the Christian church on the subject of ability and inability, have, in many cases, undoubtedly, been owing to a radical difference of opinion between the contending parties. But in other instances, those who appear to be nearly agreed in their doctrinal views, differ widely from each other in their interpretation of the leading terms employed in the discussion. The principal difference is in their giving a *broad* or more *limited* meaning to the words ability, inability, &c. One party contend, that a man has *no* ability for a required duty, unless he has *full* ability; unless he has *all* that upon which the result depends; unless he has the *inclination* to obey, as well as the requisite faculties. They admit of no division of ability into separate parts. They apply the term exclusively to the antecedents of the required act, *taken collectively*. Others think it expedient to speak of inability under separate heads; to distinguish the two divisions by calling one natural and the other moral. A third class *confine* the term to what Edwards calls natural inability. Some of these may believe in the reality of what he denominates moral inability, while they object to this application of the term. They hold that mere want of inclination is not inability. Another portion of this third class reject the doctrine of moral inability as maintained by Edwards, by whatever name it may be called. They deny that an accountable agent is subject to *any* inability of will in respect to the objects of choice which are before his mind. They believe that what is commonly meant by the expression moral inability, if it were a reality, would be natural inability of will, and inconsistent with obligation. In the language

of some, a sinner has *no ability* to do his duty. According to others, he has *no inability*. And according to others still, he has *natural* ability, but *no moral* ability.

There is not only this confusion of signification, in the use of the terms ability, inability, &c. by different writers ; but not unfrequently the *same* author substitutes the limited for the extended meaning, and natural for moral inability ; and with these pliant materials, dextrously constructs many a specious argument, which is indebted to this interchange of ambiguities for all its plausibility and power of deceiving. He starts, perhaps, with a position which none will question, that what Edwards calls natural inability, is inconsistent with obligation ; and after occupying the attention of his readers with his circuitous logic till they have forgotten his premises, he comes out with his unqualified conclusion that *all* inability is inconsistent with obligation. In the opportunity furnished for such fallacious argumentation, lies the danger to the cause of sound theological doctrine, from discussions in which these phrases are introduced.

SCRIPTURAL USAGE.

Though there are serious evils resulting from the frequent and unguarded use of the expressions which we have now been considering ; yet we can not be justified in passing a sweeping condemnation upon all phraseology of this nature, as the sacred scriptures occasionally employ terms of like import, to denote what Edwards denominates moral necessity and inability.

Luke xxiii, 17: "For of *necessity* he must release one at the feast." 1 Cor. ix, 16: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for *necessity* is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Paul was under no *natural* necessity of preaching the gospel more than any other man. But he was urged to it by powerful motives of duty and interest.

In many passages it is asserted that men *can not* do that which is opposed to their present state of mind. Matt. vi, 24: "No man *can* serve two masters." Matt. xii, 34: "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things." "God *can not* lie." "It is *impossible* for God to lie." In many instances in which it is said of certain persons that they can not do such and such things, it is evident that the only reason of their inability, is their want of *inclination*, or their having a contrary inclination; their want of sufficient *motives*, or the strength of motives to the contrary; the very conditions by which Edwards defines moral inability. Jer. vi, 10: "They *can not* hearken; the word of the Lord is a reproach unto them; they have no delight in it." Gen. xxxvii, 4: Joseph's "brethren hated him, and *could not* speak peaceably to him." Did it require any more *natural* ability to speak kindly than to speak roughly to their brother? John viii, 43: "Ye *can not* hear my word." Had they lost the faculty of hearing? or were they merely *disinclined* to hear Christ's word? Acts iv, 19, 20: "Peter and John answered, we *can not* but speak the things which we have heard." Gen. xix, 22: "I *can not* do any thing, till thou be come thither." Mark ii, 19: "*Can* the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" Acts x, 47: "*Can* any

man forbid water that these should not be baptized?" 1 Sam. xvi, 2: "And Samuel said, how *can* I go? If Saul hear it he will kill me." Luke xvii, 1: "It is *impossible* but that offenses will come; but woe unto him through whom they come." If it be said that the last passage merely expresses the *certainly* that offenses will come, it declares, at least, the *impossibility* of the *contrary*. 1 John iii, 9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he *can not* sin, because he is born of God."

It ought to be observed, that in the various instances in which these terms are used in the scriptures to express inability, they are so guarded and qualified, by the occasions on which they are introduced, and by their connection with other parts of the passages in which they are found, that an attentive and unprejudiced reader is in little or no danger of misapprehending their import. If theological metaphysicians would always provide as effectually against a wrong interpretation of their language, there would be less reason than there now is, for suggesting cautions against the erroneous construction to which a similar application of these and such like expressions are liable.

The scriptural practice of employing the term *can not*, or other words of equivalent import, to express aversion, a want of inclination, unwillingness, &c. is in conformity with frequent usage, in the language of *common life*. President Dwight, in his discourse on "man's inability to obey the law of God," observes; "The words *can* and *can not* are used in the scriptures, just as they are used in the common intercourse of mankind, to express willingness or unwillingness." After quoting several

passages in illustration of this remark, he adds; "In all these, and the like instances, there is plainly nothing meant, but inability of disposition, or a strong disinclination to the thing proposed. This is both the natural and universal language of men; found, equally, in their conversation and their writings. Children speak this language, almost as soon as they begin to speak at all; and on every such occasion, utter it more naturally, than any other language. If the scriptures would be intelligible to the great body of mankind, they must speak in the same manner. In this manner, therefore, God has directed them to be written." There are few men who have had better opportunities than President Dwight, of observing the use of language, "in the common intercourse of mankind," or who have availed themselves of these opportunities to better purpose. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of adopting the phraseology of Edwards, it is necessary to a right understanding of his work on the Will, that we have a correct knowledge of the meaning which *he* annexes to the principal words and phrases which he uses.

SECTION V.

LIBERTY AND MORAL AGENCY.

External liberty—It is opposed to compulsion, and to restraint—*Internal* liberty, or liberty of the will—Willing as we please—Independent liberty—Liberty of indifference—Contingent liberty—Moral agency.

ON the subject of *liberty* or *freedom*, which occupies a portion of the fifth section of Edwards's first book, he has been less particular than was to be expected, considering that this is the great object of inquiry in his work. His explanation of what he regards as the proper meaning of the term, is applicable to the liberty of *outward actions*; to what is called by philosophers *external* liberty. "The plain and obvious meaning of the words freedom and liberty, in common speech," he observes, "is power, opportunity, or advantage, that any one has, *to do as he pleases*. Or, in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment, in the way of doing, or conducting, in any respect, as he wills."

Liberty is a *relative* term. The primary meaning is exemption from something. "There are two things," says Edwards, "which are contrary to this which is called liberty in common speech. One is *constraint*; the same is otherwise called force, *compulsion*, and coercion; which is a person's being necessitated to do a thing *contrary* to his will. The other is *restraint*; which is his being hindered, and not having power to do *according* to his will."* "What has been said," he ob-

* Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 5.

serves, "may be sufficient to shew *what* is meant by liberty, according to the common notions of mankind, and in the *usual* and *primary* acceptation of the word." This is very well, so far as it goes. But the professed object of his book, according to the title-page, is an inquiry concerning the freedom of the *will*;—not the freedom of external conduct. We naturally look for *his* meaning of this internal liberty. What he has said, in this section, respecting freedom of the will, has rather the appearance of evading such a definition of it, as might be considered his own. He observes, as Locke had done before, that liberty belongs properly to an *agent*, and not to a mere *faculty*. "To talk of liberty or the contrary, as belonging to the *very will itself*, is not to speak good sense. For the will itself is not an *agent* that has a will. That which has the power of volition is the *man* or the *soul*, and not the power of volition itself."

Admitting the correctness of these remarks, still it may be proper to inquire, whether the *man* is free in his *willing*, as well as in his external actions. Is he possessed of freedom in his *volitions*, as well as in his bodily movements? If he is, what is the nature of this internal liberty? From President Edwards's letter to a Minister of the Church of Scotland, it would appear, that when he defines liberty to be "the power that any one has to *do as he pleases*," he would be understood to include under the expression to do as he pleases, not only acts *consequent* on volition, but *volition itself*;—that a man's liberty of doing or conducting, *in any respect*, as he pleases, implies a liberty of *choosing* as he pleases. "Nothing that I maintain," he observes, "supposes that men

are at all hindered, by any fatal necessity, from doing, or even *willing* or *choosing* as they please, with full freedom ; yea, with the highest kind of liberty that ever was thought of, or that could possibly enter into the heart of any man to conceive."

What does President Edwards mean by our willing as we please ? Is it simply willing as we *do* will ; or is it willing as we *will* to will ? Is the pleasure here spoken of, the volition *itself*, or a *preceding* volition ? One act of will *may be* according to *antecedent* acts. An imperative act may be in conformity with a preceding purpose ; and the purpose may have been formed under the influence of preceding emotions. But a man's liberty of willing, in the *first* of a series of volitions, can not, according to Edwards's own shewing, depend on a previous volition. The definition, therefore, that liberty consists in doing as we will, is not *universally* applicable to volitions themselves. It ought to be observed, however, that in putting forth that class of acts which Edwards's opponents, as well as others, most commonly call volitions, viz. *imperative* acts, we truly will as we please, that is, in conformity with our affections and desires.

"One thing more I would observe," says Edwards, "concerning what is *vulgarly* called liberty ; namely, that power and opportunity for one to *do and conduct* as he will, or according to his choice, is all that is meant by it ; without taking into the meaning of the word, any thing of the *cause* or original of that choice ; or at all considering how the person came to have such a volition." "Let the person come by his volition or choice how he will, yet if he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and *executing* his will,

the man is fully and perfectly free, according to the *primary* and *common* notion of freedom." This may be true, in its application to *external conduct*. But if we are inquiring concerning the liberty of *willing*, and if this implies a dependence on any thing preceding; we have occasion to look, at least, *one* step back, for the "cause or original of our choice." A man's power of "*executing* his will" is not his liberty in *willing*.

Some of the followers of Edwards represent liberty of will as consisting in the dependence of our *imperative* volitions upon our predominant *desires*. This is what they understand by our willing as we please. Others consider mental or internal liberty as consisting simply in the *power of willing*; so that, according to them, whoever wills is free.

President Edwards, after shewing "what is meant by liberty, according to the common notions of mankind, and in the usual and primary acceptation of the word," proceeds to state the meaning given to it by his *opponents*. "As used by them," he observes, "it has an entirely different signification. These several things belong to their notion of liberty;

1. "That it consists in a *self-determining power* in the will, or a certain sovereignty the will has over itself and its own acts, whereby it determines its own volitions; so as not to be *dependent*, in its determinations, on any cause *without itself*, nor determined by any thing prior to its own acts." This may be called *independent* liberty.

2. "*Indifference* belongs to liberty, in their notion of it; or that the mind, previous to the act of volition, be *in equilibrio*." This is what is sometimes called

liberty to either side, a condition of equal tendencies to opposite directions.

3. "*Contingence* is another thing that belongs and is essential to it ; not in the common acceptation of the word, as that has been already explained, but as opposed to all necessity, or any *fixed and certain connection* with some previous ground or reason of its existence. They suppose the essence of liberty so much to consist in these things, that unless the will of man be free in this sense, he has no real freedom, how much soever he may be at liberty to *act* according to his will."

Moral agency. Our author concludes his first book, by a few observations on moral agency. An agent is a being who *acts*, who *does* something. A *moral agent* is one who is the author of *moral* actions ; of such as are *right or wrong* ; one who is deserving of praise or blame ; and one who, if he be a finite being, is *accountable* for his actions, and merits reward or punishment. According to Edwards, "the moral agency of the Supreme Being, who acts only in the capacity of a ruler towards his creatures, and never as a subject, differs, in that respect, from the moral agency of created intelligent beings." He is not *accountable* to his creatures ; not the object of promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments.

SECTION VI.

SELF-DETERMINING POWER OF THE WILL.

Subject of discussion—Why does a man will one way rather than another?—It is the agent himself that wills—Volitions are not produced by external motives alone—Edwards's Inquiry relates to the actions of *accountable* beings—Perversion of his work by Infidels—Reason of its extent—Do his definitions correspond with *facts*?—Self-determining power of the will—Is every volition dependent on an *antecedent* volition; or on any other cause within the mind of the agent?—Is there any thing *intervening* between a cause and its immediate effect?—*Evasion* of Edwards's argument—Are our volitions determined by the mere *power of willing*?—This power gives, of itself, no *direction* to choice.

BEFORE proceeding to a review of the *argumentative* part of Edwards's work, occupying the three remaining books, it may be proper to inquire, what is the real subject of discussion? Is it some *one* position; or does it comprise *several* topics, more or less related to each other?

It may be considered to be the great object of the work to inquire, *whether the volitions of an accountable agent are determined to be as they are, independently of any influence FROM WITHOUT HIMSELF.* In other words, whether the succession of antecedents, near and remote, on which particular volitions depend, can be traced back beyond the agent himself. It is an inquiry concerning *freedom of the will.* Freedom is an exemption from *something.* Is it an exemption from *every thing*; especially from all *directing* influence from *without* the will of the agent? The question is not, whether he is depend-

ent for the *faculty* of willing, without which he could not will at all. This, it is admitted by both parties, has been given by the Creator. Nor is it the point of inquiry, whether he is dependent upon any thing without himself, for willing respecting particular objects. He can neither choose nor refuse a thing of which he has no knowledge. But the real question to be determined is, why a man wills *one way rather than another*; why he puts forth *such* volitions as he does; why he prefers the service of God to the pursuits of ambition and avarice; why one man chooses what another refuses. The object of our inquiry is not to ascertain, whether it is *the agent himself* that wills, or whether some other being wills for him. On this point, the parties are agreed. Nor do they differ in ascribing to the agent an influence in *giving direction* to his acts of will. Neither side supposes, that volitions are produced by external motives *alone*. Among the moral causes of volition, Edwards specifies *habits and dispositions of the heart*. But the real point in debate is, whether *any thing else* not belonging to the agent himself has a share of influence in giving direction to his acts of will; in other words, whether the kind of volition depends on the agent *alone*.

The discussion relates to the actions of *accountable* beings. Edwards's work is entitled an Inquiry respecting that freedom of will which is supposed to be essential to *moral agency*, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame. It has sometimes been thought, that he has labored hard to maintain the *dependence* of volitions, at the expense of *accountability*. The truth is, it is the great object of his work to shew, that dependence is *consistent* with accountability. Many hold to

accountability, and thence draw the inference, that our volitions are not dependent, for being as they are, upon any influence from without. Others believe in the dependence of our wills, and therefore deny our accountability. It is Edwards's object to maintain *both*; to shew that one is far from being incompatible with the other. He has chosen, however, to treat of these two great points, in distinct portions of his work. The subject of independent freedom of will occupies the second part. The consistency of dependence with accountability is largely discussed, in the two following parts. Is there not reason to believe, that some form their opinions of the whole work, from reading the former portion only? Has not this partial examination suggested doubts and objections, which an attentive perusal of the sequel might have effectually obviated?

In the unwarrantable separation of these two parts of the Inquiry, each of which is essential to a right understanding of the other, is to be found the secret of the perversion of the work, by some sceptical philosophers. They make a shew of accompanying the author through the first half of his book; but there they take their leave of him, and walk hand in hand with his opponents. They form to themselves a welcome, but ruinous combination of the Calvinistic doctrine of dependence with the Arminian tenet that dependent volition is inconsistent with accountability. What infidel ever made a reference to the *latter part* of Edwards's work on the Will?

Some may be ready to ask, why should a work of *such extent* as Edwards on the Will, be thought necessary, to do justice to the inquiry, whether the volitions

of accountable agents are determined to be as they are, independently of any influence from without himself. To this it may be answered, that the subject is rendered complicated, by the diversity of methods adopted by those upon whom Edwards is commenting, to explain the operations of the will, without admitting its dependence upon any external influence. To each of these, he aims to reply, by a separate and particular examination. Nor is he satisfied with giving a distinct answer to each. He proceeds to point out also the inconsistencies and contradictions between the different methods of explanation, several of which are not unfrequently resorted to by the same writer. This is one reason of the numerous, and almost unavoidable *repetitions* which occur in different parts of the work.

In his first book, he has given *definitions* of moral agency, liberty, necessity, &c. corresponding with his own opinions; and other definitions, agreeing with the views of his opponents. In the second part, his object is to determine, which of these classes of definitions accords with *fact*; with the nature and reality of things. This is a point of high importance, in all discussions relating to the properties, powers, and actions, of beings and things which have real existence. It is so easy to form definitions, that if they could be admitted to take the place of argument, the management of controversies might be reduced within very narrow limits. In the pure mathematics, where the very foundations of the science are suppositions, these, expressed in the form of definitions, are sufficient to form the basis on which the whole superstructure is reared. There is no occasion to inquire whether they correspond with facts, till we come

to make use of the results of our reasoning, in their practical applications. But in physical and mental philosophy, in moral and theological investigations, it is all important, that the models of our definitions be taken, as nearly as possible, from the realities of nature and life.

The writers to whom Edwards has undertaken to reply, have given *their* definitions of freedom ; and some of them seem to suppose, that these will be admitted as settling the controversies respecting the will. The object of the second part of his work is to inquire, whether these definitions are conformable to the real nature and operations of the human mind. He proposes to consider, " whether there is or *can be* any *such* sort of freedom of will, as that wherein Arminians place the essence of the liberty of moral agents ; and whether any such thing *ever was or can be conceived of.*" It is evident that volitions must be determined to be as they are, either by something *within* the mind of the agent, or by something *without*, or by *both* together, or by *nothing at all*. As those whose opinions Edwards controverts contend for the exclusion of *external* influence, in the determination of the will, the subject of inquiry, so far as their views are concerned, is reduced to *two* suppositions ; that a particular direction is given to volition, either solely by the *agent himself*, or by *nothing at all*. Of each of these, he gives a separate examination, beginning with the former, which he denominates the *self-determining power* of the will.

This notion of liberty appears to be derived from our views of freedom respecting *external conduct*. A man is said to act freely, when he *does as he will* ; that is, when his external actions are directed by preceding acts

of his will. And it is thought by many, that *internal* liberty must be of precisely the same character; that every free volition must be dependent on a *previous* volition; that we are not accountable for an act of choice, unless it has proceeded from *antecedent* choice; unless we have *chosen to choose* as we do. This mode of explaining the freedom of the will, may be quite satisfactory to those from whose vision a difficulty is effectually withdrawn, if it be removed only *one step* out of the way. But Edwards had a propensity to look a little farther into consequences. He was for following out a train of deductions, till he could see where it would lead him. If one free act of will is necessary, to render a consequent one free, to what, he would ask, did the *former* owe its freedom? To another preceding that, which was also made free, by another still farther back in the series? "If the will," he observes, "which we find governs the members of the body, and determines and commands their motions and actions, does also govern itself, and determine its own motions and acts, it doubtless determines them the same way, even by *antecedent volitions*. The will determines which way the hands and feet shall move, by an act of volition or choice; and there is no other way of the *will's* determining, directing, or commanding any thing at all. Whatsoever the will commands, it commands by an *act* of the will.—If the will determines the will, then choice orders and determines; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and follow the conduct of other acts of choice. And therefore, if the will determines all its own free acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a *preceding* act of choice, choosing that act. And if that

preceding act of the will or choice be also a free act, then by these principles, in this act too, the will is self-determined; that is, this, in like manner, is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses; or which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the will, choosing that. And the like may again be observed of the last mentioned act. Which brings us directly to a contradiction; for it supposes an act of the will *preceding the first act* in the whole train, directing and determining the rest; or a free act of the will, *before the first free act* of the will. Or else we must come at last to an act of the will, determining the consequent acts, wherein the will is not self-determined, and so is not a free act, in this notion of freedom. But if the first act in the train, determining and fixing the rest, be not free, none of them all can be free." This argument is repeated, in a varied form, with a logic as rigorous as Euclid's. And to prevent the possibility of being misapprehended, he has afterwards, at the close of the section, presented the demonstration, with the order *reversed*; showing, that if the will be not free in the *first* act of a series, it can not, on the principles of Edwards's opponents, be free in the *second*, which is caused by the first, nor in the *third*, which is caused by the second, nor in any one of the whole chain, as all the succeeding acts are dependent on the first.

In the argument stated above, Edwards goes on the supposition, that by the will's determining itself, his opponents mean, that it determines its acts by antecedent *volitions*. "I shall take it for granted," he observes, "that when they speak of the will as a determiner, they mean the soul in the exercise of a power of willing, or

acting voluntarily. I shall suppose this to be their meaning, because nothing else can be meant, without the grossest and plainest absurdity." But the reasoning will be substantially the same, if instead of considering one act of *will* as determining another, we substitute some *other* determining cause of volition. Let it be an act of the understanding, an emotion, a propensity, a mental state, or any thing else which is wholly *within* the mind. If it has not been there from eternity, it is itself an effect, and must have had a cause. That cause must have had another preceding it, and so on in an indefinite series, which if it be supposed to terminate within the mind of the agent, must still involve the absurdity of *a cause before the first*.

But it is said, that Edwards's *own* scheme implies an indefinite series of acts, within the mind of him who wills. He is represented as holding, not only that volition must have a cause, but also that there must be a causing act *between* every cause and its effect. Of all the strange misapprehensions which have been made of Edwards's meaning, this is surely one of the most unaccountable. Where, in all his works, has he given the semblance of an indication, that he thinks it necessary there should be a cause *intervening* between every cause and its effect? His uniform language is, that every cause which is not eternal, every event which takes place, every thing which *begins* to be, must have a cause, not *between* itself and the consequent effect, but *antecedent* to itself. Even this would lead to absurdity, if the series were required to commence *within* the mind; the mind of a being who has begun to exist. But Edwards's series may be traced back, till it extends

without the mind of the individual agent. He does not assert, that *no* volition is determined by another. He considers the *affections* as acts of the will; and these have an influence, in giving direction to our purposes and executive volitions. But he denies that *every* volition is determined by a preceding one; that the *first* in a series is dependent on another before it. In his view, freedom of the *will* is not, in *every* respect, the same as the freedom of external actions.

The argument of President Edwards, to shew that every volition can not be determined by a preceding act of the will, is so simple, so distinct, and so conclusive, that any one who ventures to encounter it *directly*, must have strong confidence in his own logical powers. But it may be *evaded*, as unanswerable arguments frequently are, by diverting the attention from the real point in discussion, and by the aid of ambiguous language, dextrously substituting something else in its place. In the following section, therefore, Edwards proceeds to consider "several supposed ways of *evading* the foregoing reasoning."

The first evasion which he notices is this; "That the faculty or *power* of will, or the soul in the use of that power, determines its own volitions; and that it does it, *without any act going before* the act determined." This he considers so "full of the most gross absurdity," that he doubts whether he should not "wrong the Arminians, in supposing that any of them would make use of it." Absurd as it may seem, this is, perhaps, at the present day, the most popular form of expressing the supposed independence of volition. How often do we hear it asserted, that a man's *power* of willing is the only cause

of his willing as he does. Edwards did not anticipate all the transcendental logic, the higher metaphysics of our times. Were he now living, he would meet with those who could teach him, that he was far from having exhausted the science of mind.

He justly observes, "If the power of the will determines an act of volition ;—that is the same thing as for the soul to determine volition *by an act of will*. For *an exercise* of the power of will, and *an act* of that power, are the same thing." Now if a particular act of will is determined by an act of will, this must be either a *preceding* act of will, or the *very act* which is itself determined. The former supposition is that which has just been considered. According to the latter part of the alternative, "the will or soul determines the act of the will, *in willing* ; it determines its own volition, *in the very act* of volition." To this, after adverting to the distinction between the order of *nature*, and the order of *time*, Edwards replies, "The very act of volition itself is doubtless a *determination* of mind ; that is, it is the mind's drawing up a conclusion, or coming to a choice between *two things* or more proposed to it. But determining among external *objects* of choice, is not the same as determining the *act* of choice itself, among various possible acts of choice. The question is, What influences, directs, or determines the *mind* or *will* to come to such a conclusion or choice as it does ? or, what is the cause, ground, or reason, why it concludes thus, and not otherwise?—To say it is caused, influenced, and determined by something, and yet not determined by any thing *antecedent*, either in order of time or nature, is a contradiction.—To say, that the will or mind

orders, influences, and determines *itself* to exert such an act as it does, by the very exertion itself, is to make the exertion both cause and effect ; or the exerting such an act, to be a cause of the exertion of such an act. For the question is, What is the cause and reason of the *soul's* exerting such an act? To which the answer is, the soul exerts such an act, and that is the cause of it."

Edwards considers this view of the subject, on the part of his opponents, an *evasion* of the point in discussion ; as they lay great stress upon the self-determining power of the will, and when the inquiry is made, *What* is it that determines volition, their answer amounts to this, that *nothing* determines it. To determine an act of will, is, according to him, to *cause* it to be what it is ; and the cause must, in the order of nature at least, *precede* the effect. When he proposes the question, What is it that determines a particular volition ? his object is not to inquire, *who* or *what* it is that *wills* thus, that puts forth this act, that is the proper author of it. On this point, he and his opponents are agreed. It is the agent himself that wills. There is nothing else that wills for him ; that produces volitions, and puts them into his mind. Motives do not cause his acts of choice without his agency. The exercise of the will is so essential to volition, that, according to Edwards, it is the very thing in which volition consists. He does not, like some others, abstract the *act* of choice from the agency of the will.

The answer of Edwards's opponents, to the question, What determines the will, is evasive in another respect. It must be admitted, that the *power* of willing does precede every act of the will ; and that it is so far a cause,

that *without* this power, no act of will could be put forth. It is *causa sine qua non*. But the mere power of willing can be properly assigned, as a reason for nothing more than the fact, that the man wills, or may will, in some way or other. It has nothing to do with giving a particular *direction* to volition. Whereas the real point of inquiry is, Why do we will *one way rather than another*? A man's power to walk in *every* direction, does not determine which way he will actually walk. An equal power to choose one thing or its opposite, can not be the sole reason why he chooses one *rather* than the other.

SECTION VII.

CAUSE OF VOLITION.

Every change must have a cause answerable to the effect—Argument for the being of a God—Reasoning analogically from material to mental phenomena—In what sense, is a man the cause of his own volitions?—Does *any thing* give direction to our acts of choice?—Or does volition determine itself?—Is there a *necessary* cause of choice?—*Contingent* cause of volition—It is the nature of choice to make a selection—Are the acts of the will accounted for in itself alone?—Volition called an *ultimate* fact—Appeal to consciousness—Edwards's own experience—What points does he take for granted?—Intuitive truths—Can a self-evident truth be demonstrated?—Does the nature of a cause determine the nature of its effects?—Theory of Doctor Watts—Are the diversities of choice owing to different *states* of the mind?—The opponents of Edwards have occasion for different hypotheses—Difficulty of avoiding misapprehension, on the subject of the will—Edwards's letter to a minister in Scotland—Willing as we please—The dependence of volition may be traced back to some thing exterior to the will—Does Edwards hold to any freedom of *will*?—Contingent agency of the will.

SOME at least of the advocates of a self-determining power in the will, state their views in such terms as imply, that volition is determined to be as it is, *by nothing preceding the act itself*. They disclaim the supposition of a *series* of volitions, each giving direction to a consequent volition. They deny that the will is determined by *motives*, either external or internal. A determination by constitutional *propensities*, or the *substance*, or *nature*, or *state* of the mind, would, in their view, imply *physical* necessity. They exclude one supposition after another, till they are reduced to the simple statement,

that a volition is determined to be as it is, *by the act itself*, by merely taking place : that its being one way rather than the opposite, is not owing to the directing influence of any preceding cause : that if the agent himself may be said to determine the act, it is only by putting it forth : that in coming to a choice, he causes himself to choose as he does.

This brings us to the second branch of Edwards's inquiry concerning the determination of the will, to the question, "Whether the free acts of the will are events which come to pass *without a cause*." Here again, it is important, that we keep distinctly in view the real object of inquiry, which is not to learn whether there is a cause of a man's *willing at all*, but whether there is a cause why he wills *one way rather than another*. The advocates of self-determination, many of them, at least, affirm that the agent is himself the cause of his own volitions ; that is, it is owing to him, that they are put forth. But is he the cause why they are one way rather than another ? Edwards's *definition* of the term cause has already been stated. He has "occasion to use it," as he tells us, "in a sense which is *more extensive* than that in which it is sometimes used." He has respect to *moral* causes, as well as those which are called natural. "Moral causes may be causes in as proper a sense as any causes whatever, may have as real an *influence*, and may as truly be the ground and reason of an event's coming to pass." He uses the word cause to signify any antecedent on which an event or thing "so depends, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole or in part," not only "why it is, *rather than not*," but "why it is *as it is, rather than otherwise*."

"Having thus explained what I mean by cause, I assert," he says, "that nothing ever comes to pass without a cause. What is self-existent must be from eternity, and must be unchangeable. But as to all things that *begin to be*, they are not self-existent, and therefore, must have some foundation of existence without themselves. That whatsoever begins to be, which before was not, must have a cause why it then begins to exist, seems to be the first dictate of the common and natural sense which God hath implanted in the minds of all mankind, and the main foundation of all our reasonings about the existence of things, past, present, and to come."

"And this dictate of common sense equally respects *substances* and *modes*, or things, and the *manner* and *circumstances* of things." Every event or change, as Edwards justly observes, must not only have a cause, but a "cause *answerable* to the effect. Our minds do alike naturally suppose and determine both these things, namely, that what begins to be has a cause, and also that it has a cause *proportionable* and agreeable to the effect.—If this grand principle of common sense be taken away, all arguing from effects to causes ceaseth, and so all knowledge of any existence, besides what we have by direct and immediate intuition. Particularly, all our proof of the being of God ceases.—Indeed, I will not affirm," he adds, "that there is, in the nature of things, no foundation for the *knowledge* of the being of God, without any evidence of it from his *works*." He admits, that "if we had strength and comprehension of mind sufficient, to have a clear idea of general and universal being," we should then have *intuitive* evidence of the being of God. "But we have not that strength

and extent of mind to know this certainly, in this intuitive, independent manner : but the way that mankind come to the knowledge of the being of God, is that which the apostle speaks of: Rom. i, 20—*The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*"

"If once this grand principle of common sense be given up, that *what is not necessary in itself must have a cause*; and we begin to maintain, that things may come into existence, and begin to be, which heretofore have not been, of themselves, without any cause; all our means of ascending in our arguing from the creature to the creator, and all our evidence of the being of God, is cut off at one blow. In this case, we can not prove that there is a God, either from the *being* of the world, and the creatures in it, or from the *manner* of their being, their order, beauty, and use. Yea, if once it should be allowed, that things may come to pass without a cause, we should not only have no proof of the being of God; but we should be without evidence of the existence of any thing whatsoever, but our own immediately present ideas and consciousness. For we have no way to prove any thing else, but by arguing from effects to causes."

The relation of cause and effect is, according to Edwards, as applicable to *volitions*, as to any other change. "It is indeed as repugnant to reason to suppose, that an *act of the will* should come into existence without a cause, as to suppose the human soul, or an angel, or the globe of the earth, or the whole universe, should come into existence without a cause."

The opinion that every volition must have an adequate cause, is sometimes ascribed to our reasoning analogically from the phenomena of the *material* world. It is said, that we are accustomed to observe the regular succession of causes and effects in the physical changes around us; and that, without sufficient reason, we infer that the acts of the mind must be subject to the same law. But the truth is, that even with respect to objects of sense, our conviction that every change must have a cause, is not derived from observation. It is by observation, indeed, that we learn *what* are the causes of particular phenomena. But that every change must have *some* cause is an intuitive truth; and is as applicable to mind as to matter. It secures that immediate, universal, and irresistible conviction which nothing can set aside, but that all-subduing sophistry which spares no first principle whatever which may happen to stand in its way.

The question concerning the cause of volition is frequently evaded in this way; if the inquiry is made, What is the cause of a man's willing as he does, the answer is, *He himself* is the cause. But *in what sense*, is he the cause of his volitions? Why, it is he himself that *wills*. The answer amounts to this, a man wills because he wills. In the language of Edwards, "the question is, What is the cause and reason of the soul's exerting such an act? To which the answer is, The soul exerts such an act, and that is the cause of it." This answer, instead of meeting the inquiry, *why* a man wills, simply states *who* or *what* it is that wills. On this point, surely, Edwards has no controversy with his opponents. He believes as fully as they do, that it is the

man himself who wills; that he is truly the *author* of his volitions; that *he* puts them forth; that no other being or thing wills for him. There may be a difference of opinion, with respect to the propriety of speaking of a man as being himself *the cause* of his hearing, or seeing, or thinking, or choosing. But the parties are agreed, that it is the agent himself that wills. Still the question returns; *Why* does he will? *Why* does the mind put forth such an act? Here is a *fact* to be accounted for. Is there any *previous* cause of this? Or are we to content ourselves with saying, the man wills, *therefore* he wills. Edwards and his opponents may, perhaps, be farther agreed, so far as to assign the *nature* of the mind as the reason why a man wills at all. But this leaves the main point of the controversy still untouched, *Why* does he will *one way rather than another*? Some of our modern philosophers, disdaining, perhaps, to deal in mere evasion, boldly venture to meet this question directly. They deny that any thing previous to the act of choosing gives any direction to the act. Motives presented to the mind as objects of choice, may furnish an *opportunity* for the will to accept or reject them. But they have nothing to do, it is said, in determining which way its choice will turn. They may *solicit* its compliance, but have no power to secure its decision in their favor. The man may have strong *desires* for certain gratifications, but desires, it is said, do not govern the will. Reason, and conscience, and religious principle, may urge their claims to a hearing; but the will is a sovereign, which acknowledges no authority, but its own arbitrary decision. It even claims exemption from the great law of causation; a law to which all other

created natures are subject. It is itself pure activity, a cause *per se*, the original source of all the series of events which follow from its action. Nothing moves it to go in any particular direction. Though it is said, that the *man* is the cause of his own volitions, yet he is allowed to be so, only in the act of putting them forth. Nothing previously belonging to him, neither his nature or his dispositions, his state of mind or his habits, his principles or his passions, are concerned in giving direction to his choice. Nor is it admitted, that he is the cause of his volitions, by any *preceding act*. It is only in the very act of making a choice, that he gives direction to that choice. In other words, the volition determines itself. The man's choosing is the very act to be determined.

It is sometimes said, that there is indeed a cause, but not a *necessary* cause of volition. If the term necessary is to be understood here, according to its common acceptation, the assertion amounts to this, that a man is not caused to will *against* his will. This, surely, is not in opposition to Edwards's opinion. He considers it *absurd* to suppose, that a man can be caused to will against his will; against his predominant inclination. But *philosophical* necessity is synonymous with *certainly*. When predicated of the relation between cause and effect, it signifies that the effect *will certainly follow* from its cause.

Some writers speak of a *contingent cause* of volitions; and explain themselves to mean, not that volitions take place *without* a cause; but that the relation between the cause and the effect is *variable*; so that, from the same cause, in precisely the same circumstances, and under

the same influence of every kind, different volitions may follow. In this respect, it is unlike all other causes. It is called a contingent cause, for this reason also, that it is supposed not to be itself caused to act in any particular way. It may have a cause of its *existence*, and its *powers*, but not of its choice. Upon this supposition, though the man is the cause of his *willing*, he is not the cause of his willing in *one direction* rather than the contrary; of his obeying God, rather than disobeying him; there is nothing, either in the mind itself, or in any influence which is exerted upon it, that causes its volitions to be one way rather than another; it is a matter of mere chance, that the voluptuary resorts to the place of his accustomed conviviality, that the merchant adopts a course of measures for accumulating wealth, that the statesman labors to promote the interests of his party, or of his country.

It is said, however, that it is the very nature of choice to *make a selection*; that the will, *in the act of choosing*, determines what course to take, and there is no occasion for farther inquiry after the cause of its preference. This is in effect saying, that the mind chooses a particular thing, because, if it chooses at all, its choice must fasten on something; every inclination of the will must be a particular inclination. But the real point of inquiry is, Why is there *this* particular inclination, rather than *some other* particular inclination? Is a man's choosing a given object, the reason why he chooses that, rather than something else? It is the very nature of *motion*, to take some particular direction. Does it follow, that the moving body *gives* this direction to its own motion? To the inquiry, why a particular body moves to the

east, rather than to the west, would it be deemed a satisfactory answer to say, that if it move at all, it must move in some one direction, and therefore it moves to the east? When a man chooses to go to church, rather than to the gaming table, is there no other reason to be given for his preference but this, that if he goes any where, he must go to some particular place? Does the profane swearer utter his oaths, merely because, if he speak at all, he must use some particular words?

But it is said again, that the will is a cause, all the acts of which are accounted for *in itself alone*. It has the power of selecting any particular object, by a *mere arbitrary act*. By *what* arbitrary act, I would ask? By a *preceding* act of the will, or by *that very selecting* act which is thus arbitrarily determined. On the former supposition, we have *two* volitions, one selecting an *object*, the other selecting this volition. Then the question returns upon us, What selected the *former* of the two volitions? Was it another arbitrary act; and so on, in an endless series? On the other supposition, we have the power of selecting a particular object, by the very act of selecting it. Is there any meaning in this, more than saying that we have the power of doing what we actually do? Is this *accounting* for the particular determination of the act of choice? Or will it be said, that it needs no explanation, and will admit of none, because it is a mere matter of chance? It is true, that whatever takes place without any directing influence from any thing preceding, if there ever was, or ever can be any such change, admits of no explanation; and this is the exact meaning of chance, taken in the most absolute sense. Choosing and refusing, accepting and rejecting,

loving and hating, are as different from each other, as a volition is from a sensation or a perception ; and as much require a difference in their causes, unless the diversity of the acts is altogether owing to accident.

It is said, in language borrowed from physical science, that volition is an *ultimate* fact ; and therefore, that it neither requires, nor admits of explanation. But by an ultimate fact, in experimental philosophy, is not meant a fact *without a cause*. It is a phenomenon the particular cause of which *has not been discovered*. That it has *some* antecedent cause, is as certain, as that any thing else has a cause. So an ultimate fact in *mental* philosophy, is one which we are not able to explain by pointing out its immediate cause. This is far from implying that it *has* no cause.

An appeal is made to *consciousness*, on this subject. It is said that we are conscious of being ourselves the cause of our own volitions. This is unquestionably true, if by being the cause of volitions is meant putting them forth, being the author of them. When a man wills, he is conscious, that it is he himself that wills. If any one doubts this, it is not President Edwards. But are we conscious, that nothing antecedent to our willing has any influence to *induce* us to will as we do ? Are we conscious, that our volitions spring into existence, without being affected by any cause prior to our agency in putting them forth ? The fact that a man wills in a particular way, is to be accounted for. Is he conscious, that there is no cause of this fact ; no cause why he wills as he does, rather than otherwise ? Is he conscious, that no temptation, argument, persuasion, or in-

fluence, has had any thing to do in bringing him to the decisions which he makes?

“One has as good a right,” says Edwards, “to alledge his experience, as another. As to my own experience, I find, that in innumerable things, I can do as I will; that the motions of my body, in many respects, instantaneously follow the acts of my will concerning those motions; and that my will has some command of my thoughts; and that the acts of my will are my own, that is, that they are acts of my will, the volitions of my own mind; or in other words, that what I will, I will. Which, I presume is the sum of what others experience in this affair. But as to finding by experience, that my will is originally determined by itself; or that my will first choosing what volitions there shall be, the chosen volition accordingly follows; and that this is the first rise of the determination of my will in any affair; or that any volition arises in my mind *contingently*; I declare, I know nothing in myself, by experience, of this nature; and nothing that ever I experienced, carries the least appearance or shadow of any such thing, or gives me any more reason to suppose or suspect any such thing, than to suppose, that my volitions existed twenty years before they existed. It is true, I find myself possessed of my volitions, before I can see the effectual power of any cause to produce them, (for the power and efficacy of the cause is not seen but by the effect,) and this, for aught I know, may make some imagine, that volition has no cause, or that it produces itself. But I have no more reason from hence to determine any such thing, than I have to determine, that I gave myself my own being, or that I came into being accidentally,

without a cause, because I first found myself possessed of being, before I had knowledge of a cause of my being.”*

Edwards has sometimes been charged with *taking things for granted*, in his book. The points which he assumes as already admitted are of two classes. In the first place, he takes it for granted, that he knows *his own meaning* of the principal terms which occur in his work, and that he has a right to state in what sense he proposes to use them. In the first part of his treatise, which is devoted exclusively to the explanation and statement of “various *terms* and *things* belonging to the subject of the ensuing discourse,” he states opinions which it is not his object to discuss in that part of his work, but which he expects to prove in the succeeding parts. For instance, after explaining his meaning of the expression *the strongest motive*, he adds; “In this sense, I suppose the will is always determined by the strongest motive.” The reasoning in support of this opinion is not presented in that place, but in the argumentative part of the work. Is an advocate at the bar charged with taking things for granted, when, in the opening statement of a cause, he lays down propositions which he expects to be able to prove, in the course of the trial?

But secondly, Edwards does take for granted such elementary truths as, by common consent, are admitted to be *intuitive*. This must be done by every writer who undertakes to argue at all. Nothing can be proved by reasoning, except by means of points previously

* Freedom of the Will, Part IV, Sec. 13, *note*.

known or admitted. Intuitive truths enter into the structure of every valid argument. In reasoning with an opponent, however, nothing ought to be taken for granted, except what he admits, or has the means of knowing. Yet the opponents of Edwards take several points for granted, which, in *his* opinion, are so far from being self-evident, that they are not even true. Generally speaking, a position is not to be received into the rank of intuitive truths, unless it be so considered by the common consent of mankind. Things may *appear* to be self-evident to one man, which are not so to others. But there are many truths which are acknowledged by all, as soon as the terms in which they are expressed are understood. These are the proper materials to be employed as elements of reasoning, in controversial discussions.

Principles assumed are not unfrequently styled intuitive truths, as an apology for not attempting to sustain them by argument. It is supposed that they are of a nature so peculiar, as not to admit of being proved. This is true in one sense only. If they are perfectly self-evident, they can not be rendered *more* evident by reasoning. But their truth, in some cases at least, may be deduced as a consequence from premises. A proposition which has been *demonstrated* can not be afterwards proved, in the sense of being made more evident; for in demonstration there are no degrees. But a truth which is already fully established, may also be sustained by various courses of argument. This is the case, even with intuitive truths. Edwards, therefore, though he advances certain principles as self-evident, yet consents to make them the subject of discussion.

One of the points which he takes for granted as intuitive, is the axiom, "that nothing ever comes to pass *without a cause*." This he considers "the first dictate of the common and natural sense which God hath implanted in the minds of all mankind." Many of his opponents will admit the principle, in terms at least. But they differ widely from him, in the application of it to acts of the will. *He* maintains that every thing which takes place must have a cause, not only of its *existence*, but of the *nature* and *manner* of its existence. "This dictate of common sense equally respects substances and modes ; or things, and the *manner* and *circumstances* of things." There must not only be a cause, but a "cause *answerable* to the effect. Our minds do alike naturally suppose and determine *both* these things, that what begins to be, must have a cause, and also, that it has a cause *proportionable* and *agreeable* to the effect." But according to some philosophers, the cause of acts of the will is essentially different from all other causes. In every other case, the nature and circumstances of the cause, determine the *particular nature* of the effect. But the nature, and circumstances, and state of mind of the willing agent do not, it is said, determine what his choice will be. They cause that there shall be volitions, of some kind or other ; but do not decide *what* they shall be ; whether right or wrong ; whether in favor of a particular object, or against it. This is like supposing a cause which should set a body *in motion*, without moving it in any one direction. If it be admitted, that a man gives a particular determination to his choice ; yet it is claimed, that he does this, only by the *act* of choosing ; which is saying, in differ-

ent words, that the choice determines itself; for the man's choosing is his choice.

In the fourth section of Edwards's Part II, he remarks upon the position of Dr. Watts, that as "spirits are of an *active* nature, the spring of action is within themselves, and they can *determine themselves*." This supposition admits that volitions have a cause, in the active nature of the mind; but assigns no sufficient reason why a man wills *one way* rather than another. It is substantially the same as the hypothesis, that the *power* of willing is of itself an adequate cause of the various phenomena of volition; with this difference, perhaps, that the activity of the mind may imply a *propensity* to will, as well as a *capacity* of willing.

As Edwards justly observes, "the question is not so much, how a spirit endowed with activity comes to act; as why it exerts *such* an act, and not another.—Activity of nature is an ability or tendency of nature to action *generally taken*.—But this can not be a sufficient cause, why the soul exerts such a *particular* act, at such a time, rather than others. In order to this, there must be something besides a *general* tendency to action; there must also be a *particular* tendency to that individual action." The active power of the mind in willing does not, of itself, determine *what* a man shall will; what words he shall speak, what gestures he shall make, what sentences he shall write, what objects he shall look at, in what direction he shall walk.

If by activity of will be meant, not the *power* of willing, but the *exercise* of that power; this activity can consist in actual willing only. When it is assigned as the cause of each particular volition, the meaning must

be, either that each volition determines *itself*, or that it is determined by a *preceding* volition. If the active nature of the *substance* of the soul be the only cause of the volitions which it puts forth, however diversified they may be, then, as Edwards observes, "the same cause, the same causal power, force, or influence, *without variation in any respect*, would produce *different* effects, at different times." For "the substance of the soul before it acts, and its active nature before it is exerted, are the same without variation." According to this supposition, there is in reality no cause or reason of the endless *variety* of human volitions. The active nature of the soul causes that there shall *be* acts of will, but *chance* determines of *what kind* they shall be.

If it be said, that the different *states* of different minds, or of the same mind at different times, will account for all the variety in the acts of will, the inquiry returns upon us, To what are we to ascribe these different states? Are *they* without a cause? One man is avaricious, another is prodigal; one is benevolent, another is malicious; the same man is, at one time, rejoicing, at another, in affliction. Are all the changes in the mind to be accounted for, by its activity alone? If each particular state of the soul has its antecedent cause, then we may trace back the series, till we come to the *first one* within the mind. This must either have *no* cause, or a cause *without* the mind. "Therefore," says our author, "the activity of the nature of the soul affords no relief from the difficulties which the notion of a self-determining power in the will is attended with; nor will it help, in the least, its absurdities and inconsistencies."

The opponents of Edwards consider it essential to accountable agency, that a man's volitions should be free from all determining influence from *without the will*. They must therefore be determined by the *will itself*, or by *nothing at all*. Of each part of this alternative, he has given a separate examination. But he proceeds to observe, in Section V, that the advocates of a self-determining power in the will, are not commonly satisfied with taking their *choice* of these two positions. They find they have occasion for *both* of them, however contradictory they may be to each other. Their philosophy may be stated in the language of the learned Cudworth, describing his own hypothesis on this subject, as "leaving a certain *proportionate contemperation and commixture* of contingency and necessity." Not that the advocates of independent volition are accustomed to lay claim to *either* of the above positions, in distinct and explicit terms. They are not themselves aware, perhaps, of the *reductio ad absurdum* to which their assumptions are exposed. It is asserted, that our volitions are not free, unless they are determined by our own choice. This removes the supposed difficulty *one step* out of the way; and this is going as far as the logical habits of many require them to go. If they are made to see, that by following up the inquiry, by tracing back the series of voluntary acts to its origin, they must, upon their own principles, ultimately come to a choice which is *before the first*; or, what is subversive of their whole theory, they must suspend their chain of volitions upon something *without* the will; they may then feel the necessity of taking their position upon the *other* branch of the alternative, that acts of the will have re-

ally *no cause*; that the doctrine of "moral causation is a metaphysical fiction." But even here, they find no substantial resting place. For if volitions have no cause, then the *agent* does not cause them, as they claim that he does; he does not determine his own acts. If it be admitted that he *does* determine them, he must do it, either by the volitions themselves, or by *previous acts* of some kind, such as perceptions, emotions, affections, &c., or by some *state*, or propensity, or habit of the mind; or by its very *nature* and original constitution. But none of these have their origin in chance. They are dependent, either immediately or remotely, upon something *without* the mind. Some, perhaps, may admit a series of antecedents, on which the particular direction of volition depends, provided the whole of this series is *within* the mind of the agent. But this is only another mode of making volition proceed originally from nothing. For if the links of the chain be traced back to their commencement, the *first one* can, by the supposition, depend upon no antecedent, either within or without the mind. The whole series, therefore, must have its origin in nothing.

It must be acknowledged, however, that in the present unsettled state of metaphysical phraseology, it is not easy to treat of these points in such a manner, as to preclude the liability to be misapprehended; especially when detached sentences are brought together, from different parts of a work, without any regard to the current of thought by which, in their original position, the author intended to qualify their meaning. In this way, it would not be difficult to bring even upon President Edwards a charge of leaning towards Arminianism. In

proof of his assertion that Arminian writers are *obliged* to talk inconsistently, he places before us a number of quotations which Dr. Whitby had made from Origen and others, implying that liberty consists in *our doing what we will*; in doing good or evil, *according to our own free choice*. The meaning of this, as Edwards observes, must be either, 1. That liberty consists in having *our external conduct* depend on our choice; or 2. That our acts of *will* are acts "*proceeding* from our own free choice;" that is, dependent on *prior* acts; or 3. That our volitions are *really* volitions; that they are our own free choice. The last of these suppositions is the identical proposition, that whatever is, is. The first, if it be *confined* to external conduct, is according to Edwards, the very doctrine which Dr. Whitby professes to oppose, as agreeing with the opinion of Mr. Hobbes. The inference then is, that when Dr. Whitby places the liberty of the *will* in a man's *willing what he wills*, his meaning must be, "That a man has power to will *as he pleases or chooses to will*; that is, he has power, by one act of choice, to choose another; by an *antecedent* act of will, to choose a consequent act.—Still the question returns, Wherein lies man's liberty in that *antecedent* act of will which chose the consequent act? The answer, according to the same principles must be, that his liberty in this also lies in his willing as he would, or as he chose, or agreeable to another act of choice preceding that. And so the question returns *in infinitum*, and the like answer must be given *in infinitum*.—If it be thus with *all* free acts of the will, then let every one judge whether it will not follow, that there is a free choice or will going *before the first* free act of the will exerted in the case.—

And finally, let every one judge whether, in the scheme of these writers, there be any possibility of avoiding these absurdities."

Let us now see, whether President Edwards himself has entirely avoided the *appearance* of inconsistency. In his letter to a Minister of the Church of Scotland, annexed to his Inquiry on the Will, he uses language very nearly resembling that which he has quoted from Dr. Whitby, in the fifth section of the second book of his inquiry. "Liberty, as I have explained it," he says, "is the power, opportunity, or advantage, that any one has, *to do as he pleases* ; or conducting, in any respect, according to his pleasure ; without considering how his pleasure came to be as it is." "And is not *choosing* as he pleases," he asks, "conducting *in some respect*, according to his pleasure, and still without determining how he came by that pleasure ?—Nothing that I maintain, supposes that men are at all hindered, by any fatal necessity, from doing, and *willing*, and *choosing*, as they please." How does the meaning of these expressions, *willing as we please*, and *choosing as we please*, when used by Edwards, differ from the meaning of the same phrases, in the writings of his opponents ? The difference may be learned, by recurring to the principles which the parties maintain, in other parts of their works, and which modify the meaning of these particular expressions.

In the first place, the *object* of Edwards, in introducing these phrases into his letter to a Minister in Scotland, is to meet the "intimations" which this minister had given, that our author's meaning, in his work on the will, had been so perverted by some, as to represent him

as agreeing with Lord Kames, denying liberty of will, and maintaining that men are *hindered by fatal necessity* from willing and choosing as they please. He claims that nothing which he has said implies, that we will *contrary* to what we please. The object of the advocates of a self-determining power in the will, when *they* use the phrases "willing as we *please*," "willing according to our own free *choice*," "acts of will *proceeding* from our own free choice," seems to be to maintain, that our volitions are not *determined* by any thing preceding, except our own choice.

Secondly, Edwards has abundantly shewn, that he does *not* hold, that *every* volition is preceded by another from the same agent. He does not admit, that this is possible, or that it is a requisite of liberty. He holds that our *imperative* volitions are under the influence of our *feelings*, which he calls affections; that in *this* sense, we will as we please; or "agreeable to our own *inclinations and passions*." And as he includes the affections in his broad definition of the will, he must hold that acts of will of one kind *may be* determined by prior acts of will of another kind; that in this sense, *we will as we will*. But that *every* volition is dependent on a preceding one of the same agent, is the very absurdity which he has taken so much pains to expose. He can not, therefore, maintain that *such* a dependence is essential to liberty. But his opponents maintain, that *no* volition can be free, unless it be determined by the will.

Thirdly, Edwards holds, that the dependence of volition may be traced back, through successive steps, till it is found to extend to something *exterior* to the will or mind of the agent. Executive acts of choice may pro-

ceed from purposes, the purposes from affections, the affections from perceptions, and perceptions from the nature of the mind, and the objects presented to its view. The nature of the mind itself has been given to it by the Creator. But according to the advocates of a self-determining power in the will, free volitions must *originate* in the will itself. There must be no dependence which reaches back to any thing without. If it be admitted, that there may be several successive acts, one determining another, they must all be acts of *will*. The series must not originate in any agency or influence from without.

Some may perhaps ask, does President Edwards really believe in any freedom of *will*? Is not his notion of liberty confined to the relation between acts of choice and *external conduct*? "I find," he observes, "that some are apt to think, that in that kind of moral necessity of men's volitions, which I suppose to be universal, at least some degree of liberty is ~~denied~~; that though it be true, I allow a sort of liberty, yet those who maintain a self-determining power in the will, and a liberty of contingency and indifference, hold a *higher sort* of freedom than I do: but I think this is certainly a great mistake.—No Arminian, Pelagian, or Epicurean, can rise higher in his conceptions of liberty, than the notion of it which I have explained.—And I scruple not to say, it is beyond all their wits to invent a higher notion, or form a higher imagination of liberty, let them talk of *sovereignty of the will, self-determining power, self-motion, self-direction, arbitrary decision, liberty ad utrumvis, power of choosing differently in given cases, &c. &c.* as long as they will."^{*}

^{*} Letter to a Minister in Scotland.

What is this notion of liberty, above which it is impossible for any one to rise, even in conception? *It is willing and acting as we please.* External liberty, according to Edwards, is *doing* as we will; and internal liberty is *willing and choosing* as we please; according to "our own inclinations and passions." In other words, our imperative volitions correspond with the state and affections of our hearts. He does not admit, that we can "rise higher" in our notions of liberty, by representing *every* volition as proceeding from a *prior* volition. This, if it is rising at all, is mounting to the region of direct contradiction. Nor does he believe in what is called by some *the liberty of contingency*; implying that our acts of choice are determined to be as they are, by no cause whatever. This also, in his view, is grossly absurd. Nor does he hold to a liberty of *indifference*, a freedom of our volitions from all directing influence of motives. On this supposition of his opponents, it can not be true, that even in the case of *imperative* volitions, we always will as we please. For if they come forth at random, without any certain dependence upon preceding feelings, they may as frequently happen to be in *opposition* to our strongest desires, as in conformity with them. That which a man abhors more than any thing else, may *chance* to be the object of his choice.

There is reason to think, that with respect to the cause of volition, President Edwards and his opponents, some of them at least, misapprehend each other's meaning. By the cause of an act of choice, he understands something *antecedent* to the act itself. He interprets the assertion that a man is the voluntary cause of his own volitions to signify, that each act of the will

is preceded by another similar act. It is upon this construction, that he applies to the position of his opponents the *reductio ad absurdum*. But in affirming that a man is the cause of his own volitions, *they* often mean nothing more than that he is the proper *author* of them, that it is he who puts them forth. In this way, they endeavor to escape the charge of holding, that volitions are events without a cause, while they do not admit, that they have any cause *antecedent* to our agency in putting them forth. Whatever may have been the fact in Edwards's time, the self-determining power of the present day, in most cases probably, is this contingent agency of the will, an agency independent of any previous directing influence.

The word cause, in its application to acts of the will, is used in the limited sense to signify merely the *agent*; not only by those who deny that any thing else is concerned in determining volition, but by some who admit the directing influence of motives. The latter prefer to call external objects the *occasion*, rather than the cause of volition; though they may not differ materially from Edwards, in respect to the efficacy of motives in giving direction to choice. *He* uses the term cause in the broad sense, to signify *any* antecedent on which volition "so depends, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole or in part, why it is, rather than not; or why it is *as* it is, rather than otherwise." In this sense of the word, neither external motives nor the agent are the *sole* cause of his volitions; but *both together* are truly the cause. In discussions on the will, it is necessary to keep distinctly before the mind the different meanings, and the different applications of this term.

SECTION VIII.

LIBERTY OF INDIFFERENCE. POWER OF
CONTRARY CHOICE.

Choice of objects between which there is no sensible difference—Indifference in the will itself—Power of contrary choice—Limited and extended meaning of the word power—Power of *moving* in opposite directions—*Faculty* of willing—The influence which gives *direction* to choice—Illogical use of the ambiguous term power—Intuitive conviction that we *could* have chosen differently—Have we equal *inclination* to contrary volitions?—Does *any thing* give direction to choice?—Is the will indifferent *at the time* of choosing?—Does the will *cause* itself to choose?—Power of the will to *suspend* volition.

ON the next subject which Edwards has considered, "the will's determining in things which are perfectly *indifferent* in the view of the mind," his arguments and explanations appear to be *more* than sufficient for every purpose, unless it be that of removing even the shadow of a difficulty, which his opponents may throw in his way. Of what possible consequence can it be to the cause of truth, and the great interests of morality, to determine whether the mind has, or has not, the power of choosing between two perfectly similar particles of matter. If there is no difference between them, in any respect, there can be no more guilt or merit in taking the one, than in taking the other. The reason why some metaphysical writers have laid so much stress upon this apparently insignificant point, is probably the *inference* which they propose to draw from the position which they assume. If it be conceded, that the mind

decides one way or the other indifferently, when the motives on each side are perfectly equal, they infer that this may be the fact, in all *other* cases, even though the motives to opposite choices may be ever so unequal. But on what ground, is this conclusion warranted? If a man is entirely indifferent which of two barley corns to take, does it follow, that he will be indifferent whether to accept of a guinea or a farthing; whether to possess an estate or a trinket?

Though the question concerning the choosing between *things* which are indifferent, may be one of little importance; this is far from being the case with the next subject of our inquiry, Whether indifference in *the will itself* is essential to liberty. In the seventh section, Edwards examines "the opinion of such as place liberty in indifference, or in that equilibrium whereby the will is without all antecedent determination or bias, and left hitherto free from any prepossessing inclination to one side or the other; that so the determination of the will to either side may be entirely from itself, and that it may be owing only to its own power, and that sovereignty which it has over itself, that it goes this way rather than that." Before entering on the argument in relation to this point, he remarks upon a certain distinction which is made by some, between the indifference of the *inclination* or *tendency* of the will, and its *power* or ability to *go either way indifferently*. This he considers a newly invented distinction, and "a *refining* only of some particular writers."

The difficulty and perplexity arising from this mysterious *power to the contrary*, there is reason to think, is not owing, as Edwards supposes, to distinctions which

are too refined ; but either to the *want* of accurate distinctions respecting it, or to our not adhering to them when made. The embarrassment which so frequently attends the subject, proceeds from our confounding the *limited* with the *extended* signification of the word power ; substituting one of the meanings for the other, and this perhaps, without being ourselves aware of the change. In willing, as in the case of many other free actions, there must be a faculty of *turning in opposite directions*, of "going either way indifferently." This is *one* element of the will, but not the only one ; unless it be a matter of absolute chance, which of the opposite directions the choice will actually take. The other element is the tendency of the mind to take one of the directions in *preference* to the other. When a man has the free use of his limbs, he can move his hand, with equal ease, to the right or to the left. It will, at his bidding, "go either way indifferently." This does not imply, that when he pleases to move it to the right, there will be an even chance whether it will turn to the right or to the left. When we say that a man has power to move his hand in opposite directions, we mean that his hand will turn either to the right or the left, *according as it is directed*. We do not mean that it will move in a particular way, whether he chooses it should or not. If such were the fact, we should not consider him as having the free use of his hand. A man who is at liberty has the power of walking either to the east or to the west. This implies two things ; First, that the structure of his limbs is equally well adapted to an eastward, and a westward motion ; Secondly, that they will actually move as he directs. If the word power be understood

to be *confined* to the first of these elements; in *this* sense, the power of motion in opposite directions is equal. It remains the same, whether the man is at rest, or is moving east, or west, or north, or south. And even at the *very time* when he is walking one way, he has *this* power of going in the opposite direction. But with this power *alone*, he would *not move at all*. He must have the other requisite of walking, a *directing* power over his limbs. It is the command which his mind has over his body, that determines whether he shall go east or west. The simple power of motion in the limbs gives no *direction* to their motion. This depends on the directing power of our minds. A man may be fully resolved to walk in one way only, at a particular time, when, so far as the structure of his limbs is concerned, he may have equal power to walk in any one of a thousand different ways. An actual choice can be in one direction only. It can not be, at one and the same time, equally inclined to opposite sides. As there can not be *motion in the abstract*, motion which has no definite direction; so there can be no *general abstract volition*; a choice where nothing particular is chosen.

This example of power to the contrary is taken, for the purpose of illustration, from a case of *external* liberty, the freedom of bodily action. Is the distinction which has been made, applicable to *internal* liberty, to the power of the *will*? A man who is free, not only *moves* as he pleases, but *chooses* as he pleases. Does this imply a power of contrary choice? In one sense of the word power, it does. The simple *faculty* of willing may be distinguished, in supposition at least, from the *influence* which gives direction to acts of choice.

Though it be true, that in actual volition, both these are always implied; yet we may make them separate objects of consideration. Now if the word power be restricted to one of these elements, the simple faculty of willing, without reference to any directing influence; it may be truly said, that a free agent has *this* power of contrary volition. He retains this *faculty*, even when his choice is most decidedly fixed on a particular object. Though a gambler be firmly resolved to go to his usual place of resort on the Sabbath; yet he has the faculty not only of *walking* to the house of God, but of *choosing* to walk there. But this no more implies, that he will ever change his course, without a change of the influence which is now operating upon him; than that his limbs will move in a different direction, while his choice remains as it is. It does not even imply, that without influence of some kind or other, he would will at all. The mere faculty of willing, or as some choose to call it, the *power* of willing, has no concern in giving *direction* to the acts of choice. This belongs to the other element in willing, to the power which *influence* has over volition. As external actions are directed by the will, so the will itself is directed by influence.

The confusion to which we are liable, in discussions on this subject, is, in a great measure, owing to our using the expression *power of the will* to signify sometimes one of these widely different elements, (the faculty of willing and the directing influence,) sometimes the other, and sometimes *both together*. "By what clear and distinct ideas," says Dr. Samuel Clarke, "can any man perceive, that an indifferency as to *power*, (that is, an equal physical power either of acting or of forbearing to act,) and

an indifferency as to *inclination*, (that is, an equal approbation or liking of one thing or of the contrary,) *is one and the same thing ?*"* In one of these senses, using power as synonymous with faculty, a man has the power of contrary choice. But the proposition is not true, when either of the other two significations is given to the term. A man is not always under equal *influence* to opposite volitions. Nor has he equal power in contrary directions, if the word power be used to include both faculty *and* influence. It may be said, perhaps, that this is an improper use of the term power. However improper it may be, it is not so very uncommon. Nor is the philological impropriety the greatest evil attending the practice. It is the logical, or rather, the illogical use of the word power, that does the mischief. The position is taken, that man has the power, that is, the faculty of having contrary volitions. From this, the conclusion is drawn, that the power of willing is the *sole* cause, why the mind wills one way rather than another. The latter proposition is true, only on the supposition that the term power is here used with a meaning very different from that given it in the preceding sentence. The power of willing, in the restricted sense in which the word is used in the premises, has no more to do with giving any particular direction to the act of choice, than the twinkling of the stars. This office belongs to a power entirely different; as much so, as the beam of a balance is distinct from the weight which causes one end to preponderate. And yet, from the simple fact, that man has a faculty of willing, which of itself gives no direction to volition, how often is the conclusion

* Reply to Collins, p. 12

drawn, that neither that nor any thing else can give direction to the will. The sophistry consists in using the same word in a *limited* sense in the premises, and with a broader signification in the conclusion. By such a mode of reasoning, the most contradictory propositions may be seemingly demonstrated. On the other hand, from the fact, that the unrenewed man has no such power, as will, of itself, actually lead him to love and obey God, some draw the inference that he has no power of *any kind* to do his duty.

It is often said, with an air of triumph, that every man, when he has made a particular choice, has an intuitive conviction, that he *could* have chosen differently ; he *knows* that he had the power of contrary choice. This is very true, if by power of choice be meant the *capacity* of choosing ; and this, it must be admitted, is the most proper meaning of the phrase. But if the word power be used to include *inclination*, as well as capacity, it is not true, that in this sense, the man has equal power to the contrary. It is not capacity, but influence, that gives direction to choice. He *could* have chosen differently ; but *would* he ever do so, under precisely the same motives of every kind. It is true, that a man often reproaches himself for having made a wrong choice ; and is confident, that if another opportunity were given him, he not only could, but would choose differently. But here is a change of the *influence* upon which his choice depends. His present feelings, the result of experience, of reflection, and perhaps of the accusations of conscience, throw a new weight into the opposite scale, which may be sufficient to make it preponderate.

Some of the opponents of Edwards may object to the distinction which has been here made, between the faculty of willing, and the influence which gives direction to particular acts of choice ; as they sometimes use language apparently expressing the opinion that there is *nothing* antecedent to a volition which determines it to be one way rather than another. This seems to be implied in what they say respecting liberty of indifference, equal liberty to either side, &c. If they would *adhere* to this position, if they would come out decidedly and consistently in favor of contingent volition, the ground of discussion on this subject would be greatly narrowed. We should then know how to understand them. But much which they say respecting self-determination, the control which the will has over its acts, &c., appears to denote a conviction, that volition is not independent of all antecedent directing influence. Whether they intend to admit this or not, so long as the point is in discussion, it is essential to a right understanding of the arguments on either side, that the *faculty* of willing should not be confounded with any *influence*, either real or supposed, which may be concerned in giving direction to acts of choice.

That indifference of the will which some suppose to be essential to liberty, they must consider either as existing *at the time* of volition, or as *preceding* it. Edwards lays it down "as an axiom of undoubted truth, that every free act is done in a *state* of freedom, and not only *after* such a state.—Because that is the notion of a free act of the soul, even an act wherein the soul *uses* or *exercises* liberty. But if the soul is not, in the very *time* of the act, in the possession of liberty, it can not,

at that time, be in the *use* of it." Now, that the mind should put forth an act of choice, while it yet remains in a state of equilibrium, involves the manifest contradiction, "that the soul chooses one thing *before* another, when at the very same instant, it is perfectly *indifferent* with respect to each. This is the same thing as to say, the soul prefers one thing to another, at the very same time that it has no preference.—Choice may be immediately *after* a state of indifference, but has no co-existence with it. Even the very beginning of it is not in a state of indifference. And therefore, if *this* be liberty, no act of the will, in any degree, is ever performed in a state of liberty, or in the time of liberty." He therefore concludes, "that the opinion of such as suppose, that indifference belongs to the very essence of liberty, is to the highest degree absurd and contradictory."

He suggests that some may attempt to *evade* this view of the case, by saying "that the thing wherein the will exercises its liberty is not in the act of *choice itself*, but in *determining* itself to a certain choice or preference; that the act of the will wherein it is free consists in its *causing* or determining the change or transition from a state of indifference, to a certain preference;—and that *this* act, the will exerts in a state of liberty, or while the will remains in equilibrium." This evasion only removes the contradiction and absurdity one step farther back; from a particular act of choice to a *preceding* choice. The equilibrium of the *will* is the point under consideration. The will, or more correctly, the mind in willing, does nothing *but* will or choose. If it determines to give direction to a *future* act of choice, it must do it by *present* choice. And there is as much

absurdity in supposing that the *first* act of preference is put forth, while the will is in a state of equilibrium, as there is in applying the supposition to any succeeding volition. The evasion may be carried still farther back, to something preceding the acts of the will itself; for no subject abounds more in evasions than this. It may be said that "indifference is essential to the freedom of an act of the will, in some sort, namely, as it is necessary that it go immediately *before* it; it being essential to the freedom of an act of the will, that it should directly and immediately *arise out of* a state of indifference." This is not indifference of *will*, but of something *antecedent* to acts of choice. It will not, therefore, answer the purpose of those who insist, that every free act must be determined by the will itself, and by nothing else.

Another evasion still is proposed; for our author seems determined to follow his opponents, through all their windings and turnings; and has searched out some obscure recesses, which, perhaps, they had never dreamed of, till his metaphysical acuteness disclosed them. It may be said, "that the liberty of the mind consists in a power to *suspend* the act of the will, and so to keep it in a state of indifference, till there has been opportunity for consideration.—But this," says Edwards, "reconciles no inconsistency, and relieves no difficulty with which the affair is attended.—For this *suspending* of volition, if there be properly any such thing, is itself an act of volition.—How can the *will* exercise liberty in it, if it be not an act of the will? The liberty of the will is not exercised in any thing but what the will does." Now this *preference* to suspend and deliberate, is not a

state of indifference. We can not here find the equilibrium of the will. Shall we search for it, in a state of the will one point higher up in the series of successive volitions? This, according to the principle of the evasion which we are now considering, would only bring us to another suspending act. "And then," says Edwards, "the same difficulties and inquiries return over again, with respect to that; and so on forever. Which, if it would shew any thing, would shew only, that there is no such thing as a free act. It drives the exercise of freedom back *in infinitum*; and that is to drive it out of the world.—On the whole," he concludes, "it is exceeding manifest, that the liberty of the mind does not consist in indifference, and that indifference is not essential or necessary to it, or at all belonging to it, as the Arminians suppose; that opinion being full of nothing but absurdity and self-contradiction."

SECTION IX.

LIBERTY WITHOUT NECESSITY. DICTATES
OF THE UNDERSTANDING.

Indifference in the *faculty* of willing—The sophistry which depends on the ambiguity of the term necessity—Contingent volition—Are volitions *certainly connected* with any preceding cause?—Does any thing *render* them certain?—Will the same volitions always follow from the same causes, in the same circumstances?—Dictates of the understanding—Do they determine the will?—Decisions of *reason* and *conscience*?

If it be said, that the liberty of indifference which is contended for, lies neither in the acts of choice, nor in *antecedent* acts, nor in *any thing* preceding, but in the *faculty* of willing; that this, like the helm of a ship, can turn one way as readily as another, according as it may be guided; if this is all that is intended by liberty of indifference, freedom to either side, power of contrary volition, &c. on this point, when thus understood, there is no controversy. But it is a point entirely distinct from the question, whether any thing *gives direction* to the exercise of this faculty; whether any thing or nothing determines the will to one act rather than another. The supposition that volition is, in the absolute sense, *contingent*, comes under consideration, in the succeeding section of our author; which is on the “supposed liberty of the will, as opposite to *all necessity*,”—to all which is *called* necessity, he might, with more propriety have said. According to his *own* representation, liberty

is inconsistent with all that is *properly* called necessity. There is reason to think, that to the cause which he has, in so masterly a manner, defended he has yet done injury, by making too liberal concessions to his opponents, with respect to their use of this term. It is to them a storehouse of ambiguities; a well furnished armory of double-edged weapons. And they are so easily managed, that they can do execution, even in the hands of very ordinary combatants. The logical process which depends on the use of this term is so simple, that the most inexperienced reasoner may soon learn to give it effect. It consists in first taking for granted, what no one will deny, that necessity, in the *common and proper* acceptation of the term, is inconsistent with liberty; and afterwards assigning to the word *any meaning whatever* which your purpose may require. You have then nothing more to do, but to draw your conclusion, that *all* necessity, in *every* sense of the term, is inconsistent with liberty. It may call for some little artifice of circumlocution, to prevent your readers from noticing the change of meaning which you have introduced. But there is no difficulty in this. The reason why *common* necessity is inconsistent with liberty is, that it is, or may be, *opposed to the will*. This opposition is so thoroughly inwrought into our common notions of necessity, that however the meaning may be modified in other respects, most readers will take it for granted that this, which they are accustomed to consider as the *essential* element in all necessity, is *included* in any new signification which is given to the term.

Edwards could not do justice to the investigation of his subject, without introducing the word necessity into

his book, with the various significations given it by his opponents, for the purpose of examining their arguments, the validity or fallacy of which depends, in many cases, upon these significations. But he might have protested, in still stronger language than he has done, against the numerous impositions practiced, by the changes rung upon this flexible term. Notwithstanding the precautions which he has taken, to guard against a wrong construction of this ill-chosen word, is it certain, that his own meaning is never misapprehended ?

He proceeds, in the eighth section to inquire, "whether there is, or can be, any such thing, as a volition which is contingent in such a sense, as not only to come to pass, without any necessity of constraint or co-action, but also, without a *necessity of consequence*, or an *infallible connection* with any thing foregoing." He may have thought it expedient to use the term *necessity* here, rather than *certainty*, or certain connection, for two reasons ; First, because certainty, especially the certain connection between volition and its causes, is by many represented as necessity ; and from this, as has already been observed, the conclusion is drawn, that it is inconsistent with liberty. It is the aim of our author to shew, that by whatever terms this relation may be expressed, its *nature* is not altered by the name ; that *such* a necessity, if it be proper to call it necessity, is not inconsistent with liberty.

Secondly, from the tenor of his observations in this section, it would appear that he had more particularly in view a class of writers who hold, that future volitions are *certain, but not necessary* ; meaning that although it be certain that they will take place, yet they are not

certainly *connected* with any preceding cause. If there can be any future events which are, in the absolute sense, contingent, entirely independent of any cause whatever, yet they are, in one sense, certain; *if* they are to happen, they will certainly happen; in other words, whatever will be, will be. In this way, some writers contrive to apply the term certain to events which they suppose to be altogether loose from any previous determining influence. If it be admitted, that they are connected with *any* thing preceding, it is only with foreknowledge; and this has no concern in bringing them to pass. There is nothing which *renders* them certain. They are certain, only because they will certainly *happen* to take place. But Edwards endeavors to shew, that volitions are *rendered* certain by their causes. This is what he calls a *necessity of consequence*, or an *infallible connection*. He had previously shewn, in the third section, that "nothing can ever come to pass, without a cause, or reason why it exists in this manner rather than another," and had "particularly applied the evidence of this to acts of the will." From this he infers, that volitions are *connected* with their cause; not in the way in which contingent events are supposed to be connected with the *foreknowledge* of them; but in the way of *dependence*. "To say the event is not dependent on its cause is absurd.—For dependence on the influence of a cause, is the very notion of an effect. If there be no such relation between one thing and another, consisting in the connection and dependence of one thing on the influence of another, then it is certain there is no such relation between them, as is signified by the terms cause and effect."

The infallible connection between effects and their causes implies, that the same effects will *always* follow from the same causes, in the same circumstances. If any event "might have followed or might not, when the cause was the same, its influence the same, and under the same circumstances,—*why* did it follow, rather than not follow? There is no cause or reason of this. Therefore here is something, without any cause or reason why it is.—To suppose there are some events which have a cause and ground of their existence, that yet are not necessarily," that is, certainly "connected with their cause, is to suppose that they have a cause which is *not* their cause." It implies, "that the influence of the cause is not *sufficient* to produce the effect. For if it had been sufficient, it would have done it.—And if it was not sufficient to produce it, then the production of it could not be owing to that influence, but must be owing to something else, or owing to nothing.—And if the effect is not owing to the influence of the cause, then it is *not* the cause." That which *seems* to be the cause, in the supposed case, can be no cause.

DICTATES OF THE UNDERSTANDING.

In his ninth section, Edwards treats of the connection of the acts of the will with the *dictates of the understanding*. The principal difficulty here arises from the disagreement among metaphysicians, in classifying the powers of the mind; in determining where the line is to be drawn, between the understanding and the will. According to some writers, it is the particular province of the understanding to distinguish between *truth and*

error. According to others, it includes the power of deciding between *right and wrong*, the office of conscience. Others again extend it so far, as to bring within its scope the perception of what is *agreeable or disagreeable*; of what Edwards calls the greatest apparent good. The feelings which he denominates affections, and which he considers as belonging to the will, some would refer to the understanding, while others would assign them a place under a third faculty, distinct from the understanding, and from the will also.

When the inquiry is made, whether volition always follows *the last dictate of the understanding*, it is important to know whether by this expression is meant a decision of the intellect merely, or a dictate of *conscience*, or an impulse of predominant *feeling*. That the will is not always moved by the intellect alone, without any influence from conscience or emotion, will probably be admitted by all. That volition does not invariably follow the dictates of conscience, that a man does not always do that which he knows to be right, is also very evident.

When Edwards says, that to affirm that men do not choose *what seems most pleasing* to them, or what they *prefer*, implies a contradiction; does he mean to have us consider the expressions, *choosing, being pleased with, and preferring*, as exactly synonymous? If he does, his assertion is not concerning one act of the mind *depending* on another; but concerning the denial of an identical proposition. If by choosing, he means an *imperative* volition, choosing an *action*, and by "being pleased with," he intends *an affection*, being pleased with an *object*; he truly states the dependence of acts of one kind upon acts of a different kind. But according

to his classification, they are both *acts of the will*, and therefore, do not shew the "connection of the acts of the will with the dictates of the *understanding*." Being pleased with an object is something different from a simple decision of the intellect, in the limited and common acceptation of the term. It is probable, that in the class of dictates or views of the understanding, some of the opponents of Edwards intended to include what his own classification would refer to the will. "What makes the will choose," says Dr. Whitby, "is something approved by the understanding, and consequently *appearing to the soul as good*." From the fact, however, that imperative volitions are controlled by the affections, by the greatest *apparent* good, it does not follow, that the latter is always in accordance with the convictions of the intellect. "Were the will determined," says Mr. Locke, "by the views of good, as it appears in contemplation greater or less to the understanding;—I do not see how it could ever get loose from the infinite, eternal joys of heaven, once proposed and considered as possible.—Then we should keep constantly and steadily in our course towards heaven, without ever standing still, or directing our actions to any other end; the eternal condition of a future state infinitely outweighing the expectation of riches, or honor, or any other worldly pleasure, which we can propose to ourselves."

Wherever Dr. Whitby would draw the line between the will and the understanding; if, as he affirms, *evidence* proposed, apprehended, and considered, is sufficient to make the understanding approve, and that what makes the will choose, is something approved by the understanding, he establishes a *fixed connection between*

volition and evidence. "Whatever his design was," says Edwards, "nothing can more directly and fully prove, that every determination of the will, in choosing and refusing, is necessary; directly contrary to his own notion of the liberty of the will;—and he, at one stroke, has cut the sinews of all his arguments from the goodness, righteousness, faithfulness, and sincerity of God, in his commands, promises, threatenings, calls, invitations, expostulations."

It does not appear, that President Edwards adopted the modern distinction between the understanding and the *reason*. His signification of the former term may be considered as broad enough to include the meaning of the latter; so that most of his observations respecting the one, are applicable to the other. If that which appears *reasonable* to a man is *agreeable* also, because it is seen to be reasonable, it constitutes what Edwards calls apparent good, a motive to volition. But if the man is perfectly *indifferent* to that which his reason shews him to be true; if it excites in him no emotion; no feeling of pleasure or gratification; if he has *no regard* for the truth, it does not come under Edwards's description of apparent good. Still, if it has any tendency to incline the will, it is comprehended in his definition of *motive*. The same may be observed with respect to the distinction between right and wrong. If a man not only knows what is right, and what is wrong, but *loves* the right, and *hates* the wrong, the one is to him apparent good, and the other apparent evil. But so far as he is *indifferent* to both, the decision of his conscience does not belong to the will, even if it be admitted, that it may have an *influence* on the will, in the way of motive.

SECTION X.

INFLUENCE OF MOTIVES.

External and internal motives—Are motives the *causes* of acts of choice?—It is the *mind* that wills—Are motives mere *objects* of choice?—Mr. Chubb's scheme of liberty—Does the mind of the agent determine whether motives shall have any efficacy or not?—Does the strongest motive always prevail?—The same outward objects, acting as motives, have not invariably the same relative strength—Meaning of *tendency*—There is no particular *kind* of motive which is invariably the strongest—The term motive is not confined to *specific* desires—Is it by reasoning in a circle, that we come to the conclusion, that the strongest motive will prevail?—Is the strength of a motive *measured* by the results to which it leads—The vividness of our emotions measured by consciousness—What can induce a man to will in opposition to the strongest motive?—Does the *agent* give to the weaker motive a preponderance over the stronger one?—Can not the Almighty create beings capable of willing contingently?—Choosing what is most *reasonable*?—Do we ever choose in opposition to that which is the most *agreeable*—May not a regard to what is reasonable and right be a stronger motive with some, than the promptings of appetite and passion?—Why are our volitions so variable?—Our calmer feelings often prevail over those which are more violent—Is there *any* reason why a man wills one way rather than another?

IN the tenth section, Edwards brings under examination the subject of motives. One principal ground of misapprehension, in the controversy on this point is, that Edwards's definition of motive is so broad, as to comprehend "the *whole* of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition," while his opponents, some of them at least, understand the term as referring to something which is *without* the mind. Mr. Chubb, the opponent specially noticed in this tenth section, ob-

serves, "If the moving principle in man, were moved or caused to be exerted, by something *external* to man, which *all* motives are, then it would not be a self-moving principle." "By motives," says Dr. James Dana, "*we* mean *external* reasons, or inducements exhibited to the view of a moral agent." Edwards's definition does not *exclude* external objects; but it comprises something more, the state and temper of the mind itself. He considers it essential to a motive, that it should have some *tendency* to move or excite the will. And it has this tendency, he observes, not only from the *thing viewed*; but also, from "the nature and circumstances of the *mind that views*, and the degree and manner of its view." It must "*appear agreeable, or seem pleasing* to the mind." After speaking particularly of the manner of viewing an object of choice, he adds; "The *state of the mind* is another thing that contributes to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of that object; the particular temper which the mind has by *nature*, or that has been introduced and established by *education*, example, custom, or some other means; or the frame or state that the mind is in, on a *particular occasion*." Here the *internal* motive is represented as constituting a part of that which moves the will. We meet with still farther embarrassment in the discussion, when we consider, that according to Edwards, this internal motive *may* be an act of the will itself. *Being pleased* with an object is an affection of the mind; and he considers the affections as belonging to the will. He is far from supposing, however, that a volition can be a *motive to itself*. The motive to a particular act is always *antecedent* to the act. But a volition of *one kind* may be a motive to a volition

of another kind. An affection may be a motive to an imperative act.

Motives, says Edwards, are the *causes* of acts of the will. But this assertion is to be understood with some qualifications. He does not mean that *external* motives, of themselves alone, are the causes of volition. As has already been stated, he takes into the account *the state of the mind*; the *temper* which it has, by nature, education, or custom. An object is not a motive to a man, unless it is fitted to excite feeling in *such a mind*; and the state of his mind does not move him to choose the thing presented to his view, unless he is fitted to receive impression from *such an object*. Neither of these, by itself, constitutes the *whole* cause of volition. The same object, presented to different minds, will be the occasion of different volitions; and the same mind will have different volitions, in view of different objects.

If motive be taken even in the *broadest* signification, as defined by Edwards, so as to include "*the whole* of that which moves, excites," &c., he does not make it the cause of volition, in such a sense as to exclude the *agency of the mind* in choosing. It is the mind that wills, not the motive. Motives do not choose, refuse, prefer, and resolve. Not only is the internal motive a state or affection of the mind; but the volition itself is an act of the mind, different from the motive. Though Edwards sometimes speaks of motives as exciting and causing *volition*, this is evidently elliptical phraseology; for in his formal definition, and in other places, he represents motives as moving and exciting the *mind* to volition. In the very paragraph in which he speaks of the strongest motive as that which "operates to induce

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a particular *act of volition*," he had previously defined motive to be "that which, excites or invites the *mind* to volition;" and in the paragraph immediately following, he observes, "nothing can induce or invite the *mind* to will, or act any thing, any farther than it is perceived, &c.—In every act of will whatsoever, the *mind* chooses one thing rather than another." When, at the commencement of the tenth section, he asserts, that "every *act* of the will has some cause," as it is "excited by some motive," he speaks of the *mind*, in willing, and choosing, as excited by motive or inducement.

One reason, probably, why Edwards speaks of motives as *causes* of volition, is to express his conviction, that they have a real *influence*, in giving direction to the will; in opposition to the opinion, that they are mere *objects* of choice, affording an *opportunity* for the mind to choose, but having no concern in directing its decision. "Motives," he observes, "do nothing as motives or inducements, but by their *influence*." Nearly the whole of this tenth section, is occupied with an examination of *Mr. Chubb's scheme* of liberty. We shall not be surprised to find some difficulty in this part of the discussion, which is wholly on the nature and office of motives, if we bear in mind, that according to Chubb, "all motives are *external* to man," while Edwards, in his definition of motive, includes *the state of the mind*. The theory of motives brought to view, in the section before us, is not peculiar to Mr. Chubb. It is popular with many who have never, perhaps, heard of him as its advocate. It is substantially this; There must be motives to excite, induce, or dispose the mind to action. Without these, it can not will at all. But they must

have permission from the mind itself, before they can throw upon it any effectual influence. It is the mind that determines, whether they shall have any efficacy or not; and that gives to different motives their comparative strength.

Now if nothing more is intended by this, than to assert, that an outward object has no influence on the will, unless there is something in the nature, or state, or temper of the mind, adapted to receive impression from the object; this is only saying that a man is not determined in his choice, by that to which he is *perfectly indifferent*; that nothing *external* becomes a prevailing motive, unless it meets some sensibility in the mind, which renders it a motive, in Edwards's sense of the term. But that in the state of the mind upon which, in part at least, the efficacy of motives depends, can not always be volition itself. A man does not give to motives all their strength, by *choosing* whether they shall have influence with him or not. This would imply, that he is seeking motives to induce him to choose that which he has already chosen. Certainly, the motive which influences the mind to the *first* volition in a series, can not be dependent on a previous volition.

THE STRONGEST MOTIVE.

One of the most important subjects for consideration, in this tenth section, is the question, whether the *strongest motive* always *prevails*. What Edwards means by the strongest motive, is that which has the greatest *tendency* to prevail; which has this tendency *previous* to the volition that actually takes place. That which has

"the greatest degree of *previous tendency* to excite and induce to choice, is what I call the strongest motive. And in *this* sense, I suppose the will is always determined by the strongest motive." The definition implies so much as this, that motives *have* a tendency to move the will, and that they have this tendency in *different degrees*. If men were perfectly indifferent to all motives, if none had any influence over the will, or if their power to excite volition were, in all cases perfectly the same; then Edwards's definition would have no application to *our* world, however well it might be adapted to other orders of beings.

But if wealth, and office, and splendor, and renown, and pleasure, have any allurements for their votaries, then they have a *tendency* to move the will. If the offer of an estate is a greater stimulus to action, than a ten dollar note, then there are *degrees* of influence; one motive is *stronger* than another. But this depends, it may be said, upon the character of the persons addressed. What would be to one man a powerful inducement, would by another be viewed with indifference. Here we have occasion for the distinction between the different significations given to the term motive, by President Edwards, and Mr. Chubb. Edwards does not mean to say, that of two *outward objects*, that which presents the strongest inducement to one man, does so to every other; or even to the same man, at different times. There may be changes in his character, or in his circumstances, which will render a thing desirable to him now, that had previously been an object of dislike. But this does not imply, that when the same object is, at different times, before the same mind, in precisely the same state,

in the same circumstances, and with the same manner of view, the consequent volition will be diversified. An outward object has *no strength at all* as a motive, unless it meets something in the mind, fitted to give it influence in directing the will.

If the term motive be taken in Edwards's sense, so as to include the nature, state, and temper of the mind; the *whole* of that which excites, or is fitted to excite, to a particular act of volition; this "complex motive," while it remains the same, has, according to him, the same *strength*, the same *tendency* to move and direct the will. What do we mean by tendency? A thing is said to have a tendency to a particular result, when it is of such a nature, that if this tendency *be not counteracted*, the result will in fact take place. "It is the commonness or constancy of events," says Edwards, "that gives us a notion of tendency, in all cases."* As different things may have opposite tendencies, one of these may overpower the other. A cause which has a tendency to produce a particular effect, will actually produce it, unless it is prevented by some cause which has a different tendency. The gravitation of the earth has a tendency to give a level surface to the waters of the ocean. If they were left to this influence *alone*, they would be actually and uniformly level. But the attraction of the moon, and the force of the winds, have a contrary tendency. The consequence is, that the ocean is never perfectly level, in every part of its surface. A stone has a tendency to fall toward the earth. This implies, not that it is always actually falling; but that it *invariably* falls, when not obstructed, or under the

* Original Sin, Part I, Chap. I, Sec. 2.

influence of some opposing force. Even when thrown directly upwards, it still retains its downward tendency, which at first retards, and soon destroys, its upward motion.

A *motive* has a tendency to excite the mind to a particular volition, when the motive is of such a nature, that the volition will in fact follow, unless prevented by some opposing motive. There is a manifest difference, between the *strength or tendency* of a motive, and its actually *prevailing*. Two motives may have contrary tendencies, one inviting to a particular choice, the other dissuading from it. Both can not prevail at the same time. Yet each may retain its tendency; that is, it may be of such a nature, that it *would* prevail, if not counteracted by other influence. The choice which is actually made, depends on the *preponderance* of one of the tendencies over the other. The separate tendency of each is toward the choice which *would* be made, under the influence of that motive *alone*. Avarice may prompt a man to a particular act, from which a regard to reputation may deter him. The mercenary motive does not, in this case, prevail. But its *nature and tendency* are not altered, by its being counteracted by a different motive. The weight in one scale of a balance loses nothing of its nature, by the action of a heavier weight in the opposite scale. It should be observed, however, that the word tendency is *sometimes* used in reference to what may be expected actually to take place, as the result of the *combined agency* of different causes, modifying each other's influence. This is, properly speaking, the *balance* of the separate tendencies of the several causes concerned in producing the effect.

But even in the case of *internal* motives, Edwards does not hold, that desires, emotions, passions, &c. which are designated by particular names, have invariably the same relative strength; the same degree of influence over imperative volitions. They can not be classified and marked, like the weights belonging to the scales on a merchant's counter; so that, comparing any two, it can be said, that this has always greater efficacy than the other. Ambition is not invariably stronger than avarice. The love of power has not always greater influence in determining the will, than animal gratification. The passions may be violent in one man, and languid in another. In one, the love of gain may be the controlling spring of action, in another, a thirst for knowledge.

Even in the *same* individual, one class of desires may be strongest at one time, and a different class, at another time. The passions are variously excited, by an almost endless diversity of circumstances. At one time, a man may be ready to sacrifice his prospects for life, by yielding to present gratification. At another time, his regard for his future interests may be so strong, as to restrain him from ruinous indulgences. At one period of life, he may be so engrossed with the pursuits of the present world, as to be regardless of his everlasting welfare. At another, his attention may be so roused to the salvation of his soul, as to withdraw his thoughts and feelings from earthly concerns. There is no *particular kind* of motive, which is entitled to be called the strongest, as being the invariable antecedent of the same volitions. Still it may be true, that of the motives which are before a man's mind, at any particular time, some are

stronger than others. What is more variable than the force of the wind? Who infers from this, that there are no degrees of strength in its motion; that the impulse of a gale has no greater power to move a ship, than a gentle breeze?

Edwards does not confine the term motive to what may be called *specific* desires; to emotions which fasten on some particular object. The general desire of future good, and a regard for the welfare of others, or the interests of the divine kingdom, if they have any influence in giving direction to volition, are included in his definition of motive. These may be *less variable* than specific desires. Still it does not follow, that they are always stronger, or always weaker than specific desires. Even if the general desire were *perfectly* uniform, the specific desires, being variable, might sometimes be stronger, and sometimes weaker than the other. The power of gravity, at a particular place on the earth, is always the same. Yet the attractive force of a magnet may, at one time, be insufficient, and at another time, more than sufficient, to raise a given weight from the ground in opposition to its gravitating power.

Does the strongest motive always *prevail*? If several motives are presented to the mind at the same time, one of these may be stronger than either of the others taken separately, but weaker than a number of them taken collectively. The combined strength of these, in opposition to the single one, will prevail against it. But if by motive is meant the *whole* of that which invites the mind to a particular choice; and by the opposite motive, the whole of that which opposes such a choice; to say that the weaker of these may prevail against the

stronger, involves a contradiction. For according to our definition, the strength of a motive consists in its tendency to prevail; and this tendency implies, that the motive will actually prevail, unless counteracted by a *greater* tendency, that is, by greater strength, in the opposing motive.

It may be said, perhaps, that this is after all, settling the point in question, *by a definition merely*; that it is drawing our conclusion from suppositions, and not from facts; that it is taking for granted the thing to be proved, and then arguing in a circle, saying that a particular motive is the strongest because it prevails, and that it prevails, because it is the strongest. To enable us to determine, whether this objection is valid or not, it is necessary to distinguish what is here matter of definition, from what is a question of fact. Edwards's definition implies, not only that motives tend to prevail, but that they actually prevail, unless counteracted by stronger motives. Whatever does less than this, is *not* a motive, in his sense of the term. The question of *fact* is, whether there are, in reality, any such motives; whether there is any thing which has a tendency to induce a man to will one way rather than another; when different motives are before the mind at the same time, whether one has more influence than another, in giving a particular direction to choice; whether there is any *difference* in the strength of motives; whether one has a *greater tendency* to move the will than another; whether one, by its influence, ever *prevails* over another. These are points to be determined, not by definition, but by our own consciousness, and observation of the conduct of others. If any thing has any influence over our wills,

and if there are any degrees of this influence ; then there are motives, in Edwards's sense of the term, and some of them are stronger than others ; there are facts which correspond with his definitions.

Still it may be urged, that he *measures* the strength of a motive, by the results to which it leads ; and does not this imply, that he considers the prevailing of the motive the same thing as its strength ? To this I answer, that in most cases, we measure the efficacy of a cause, by the effects which it produces. Yet the strength of the cause is not in the effect, but in the cause itself. In many cases, we learn even the *existence* of a cause, from the effects only. Who knows any thing of gravitation as a cause, but from the effects which are observed ? Yet this does not identify the effects with the efficacy of the cause. The strength of a *motive* is not its prevailing, but the *power* by which it prevails. Yet we may very properly *measure* this power by the actual result. We measure the strength of a charge of powder, by the momentum which it gives to a ball. But the strength of the powder does not *consist* in the motion of the ball. It is the power by which the motion is produced. It is the degree of *tendency* in the powder towards such an effect. We learn the weight of gold compared with cork, by the motion which it gives to a balance. Yet this motion is not the weight itself, but the effect of it. The gold was heavy, *before* it was placed in the balance. The strength of a motive exists, *before* it moves the will.

We may measure the comparative strength of motives of *different kinds*, from the results to which they lead ; just as we learn the power of different *causes*, from the effects which they produce. Who could estimate the

relative force of steam, and of the muscular action of animals, by examining the *nature* of these causes, so very dissimilar? But by comparing their effects, in moving a boat or a mill, we obtain an accurate measure of their respective powers. There is little resemblance between parental affection and appetite for food. But when the mother denies herself the repast which she needs, that she may make provision for the wants of her children, we learn the comparative strength of the two propensities.

It is sometimes said, that we measure the *vividness* of our emotions by our *consciousness*, and that, in this way, we learn, that the will does not always yield to those which are the most vivid. The answer to this is, that if the vividness of feeling is any thing different from a *tendency* to influence the will, then it is not what Edwards means by the *strength* of a motive. It is admitted, that what we sometimes consider our more lively emotions, calling for present indulgence, have frequently less tendency to determine particular acts of will, than a firm and steady regard for our future welfare. But this only proves, that the strength of motives is not always proportioned to the apparent *vividness* of our feelings. The tendency of a motive to give a particular direction to choice, does by no means depend on our ability to *measure* this tendency.

If a man ever wills in opposition to the stronger of the two contrary motives which are before him at the time, he must be induced to do so, either by the *weaker* motive, or by *something else*, or by *nothing*. By one of the two motives, either simple or complex, is here meant, according to Edwards's definition, *all that which*

tends to move the will in one direction ; and by the other motive, all that which tends to move the will in the opposite direction. By the *stronger* motive is meant that which, *to the man*, is the more powerful inducement of the two, though it may not be so to others. To say then, that he is induced, by the *weaker* motive, to will in opposition to the stronger, is to say, that that which has less influence upon him than the other, has in fact greater influence. "If the Most High," says Edwards, "should endow a balance with agency or activity of nature, in such a manner, that when unequal weights are put into the scales, its agency could enable it to cause that scale to descend which has the least weight, and so to raise the greater weight ; this would clearly demonstrate, that the motion of the balance does not depend on weights in the scales." If it be said, that *something else* turns the will to the side of the weaker motive, then that something else, whatever it may be, is itself a motive, which added to that which is called the weaker, overbalances the other. Therefore the *entire* motive on this side, is, in fact, stronger than the other ; and ought to prevail, as truly on Edwards's principles, as on the supposition of his opponents. If the will turns from a stronger to a weaker motive, while *nothing* induces it to do so, then this nothing has greater efficacy than a real motive ; and as nihility has no limits, it may successfully counteract the most powerful inducements ever presented to the human mind. The triumphs of nonentity may set at defiance all the influence of persuasions and arguments, of rewards and penalties ; of law, and conscience, and retributive justice.

Is it *the man, the agent*, that gives to the weaker motive a preponderance over the stronger? If by the man be meant the state of his mind, his perceptions, his propensities, temper, and feelings; these, according to Edwards, are to be considered as belonging to the *motives* which have influence upon his decisions. If it be said that the man, simply as an agent, independently of the states and feelings of his mind, has the power of deciding in favor of the weaker motive, this implies, that one motive has no more influence than another; in other words, that they have no influence at all, in giving direction to choice. We are all agreed, that it is the agent that wills, and not the motive. But does any thing *induce* him to will one way rather than another? If not, the direction which his volitions take, must be a matter of absolute contingency; unless the very *nature* of the soul is subject to all the changes which we find, in the determinations of the will.

It may be said, that He who is almighty and omniscient is certainly able to create beings, possessing the faculty of willing contingently, and independently of the influence of motives. But what evidence have we, that He has, *in fact* created such agents. In what world are they to be found? They must be very different beings from any with which we are acquainted on the earth. God is *able* to create a mountain of pure gold, and to suspend it in the atmosphere, like a cloud. But is this any proof, that such a body has been actually placed there?

Some appear to suppose, that the way in which a man determines what motives shall have influence on his will, is by a *preceding* act of choice. But this is carry-

ing back the freedom of volition, to the *first* in a series of acts, to an act which can not, according to their own supposition, be free, unless it be exempt from all influence of motives. "To suppose, as Mr. Chubb plainly does," says Edwards, "that every free act of choice is commanded by, and is the produce of free choice, is to suppose the first free act of choice belonging to the case, yea, the first free act of choice that ever man exerted, to be the produce of an *antecedent* act of choice.—According to him, every free act is the produce of a free act; so that there must be an infinite number of free acts in succession, without any beginning, in an agent that has a beginning. And therefore, here is an infinite number of free acts, every one of them free; and yet, not any one of them free, but every act, in the whole infinite chain, a necessary effect."

It may be said, that we sometimes choose that which is the *most agreeable*, and sometimes that which is the *most reasonable*, or that which appears to us to be *right*; that neither is uniformly the strongest motive. But when we obey the dictates of conscience and reason, rather than the calls of ambition, and sensuality, and avarice; is it not because we have a *greater regard* for the former than for the latter; because obedience to truth and duty is in fact the *most agreeable*, as well as the *most reasonable*? Have we no susceptibility to enjoyment, except from the objects of sense, and of criminal passion? "It is most agreeable to some men," says Edwards, "to follow their *reason*; and to others, to follow their appetites." Does the worldly man ever find higher gratification in his pursuits and indulgences, than the devoted Christian, in doing the will of his Father in heaven?

Have the violators of God's law appropriated to themselves all that deserves the name of pleasure? When the saints in heaven bow in ceaseless songs of praise before the throne of God and the Lamb, is there nothing *agreeable* in this? Is it *merely* reasonable?

It may be said, that we sometimes conform to that which we *dislike*; that we choose in *opposition* to what is most agreeable to us; that we can abstain from food which we relish, and consent to take medicine which we think of with aversion. But is that which we dislike ever chosen *for its own sake*; and not as a means of obtaining some other good, or avoiding some other evil? Are not the means and the end, taken together, more agreeable, or less disagreeable, than the object in comparison of which these are preferred? The prudent man refrains from the free indulgence of his appetites, to secure the enjoyment of uniform health. He consents to take the medicine which he dislikes, to obtain relief from disease. When a man has an inducement to make a particular choice, does he ever make an opposite choice, without any inducement whatever? If a metaphysician can appear to do this for the sake of *showing* what he can do, is not *this* the real motive which turns the scale? Does any one ever yield to criminal indulgence, in opposition to reason, while he has a *greater regard* for reason, than for this indulgence?

Let it be admitted, that obedience to truth is often chosen *for its own sake*; not because it is the most agreeable, but because it is the most reasonable; that right is preferred simply because it *is* right; that conscience is obeyed, not to avoid its painful reproaches, but because it *ought* to be obeyed. On this supposition

we have a regard for truth, and duty, and conscience. They have an *influence* over our wills ; they have a *tendency* to give direction to our choice ; and are therefore *motives* to volition. They may have, with many minds, a *greater* tendency to move the will, than appetite and passion ; and therefore may be *stronger* motives.

Again it is said, that our decisions, in view of reason and right, on the one hand, and the solicitations of ambition and pleasure, on the other, are very *variable*, that we sometimes comply with the one, and sometimes with the other ; showing that the strongest motive does not *uniformly* prevail. But what evidence is there, that our *motives* are not as variable as our volitions ; that particular occasions and circumstances give greater intensity to the temptations to unlawful indulgence, and that other occasions press upon us more urgently the claims of reason and conscience ; so that sometimes the one, and sometimes the other may gain the ascendancy ? *The state of the mind* may, at one time, be such as to receive powerful impressions from objects of sense ; and at another time, it may be prepared to give earnest attention to considerations of duty. To this explanation it may be objected, that our consciousness tells us that our *calmer* feelings often prevail over those which are more violent. But this only shows that our more vivid emotions are not always those which have the greatest power to give direction to choice ; and therefore are not invariably the *strongest* motives.

Is there any reason whatever why a man sometimes chooses that which is agreeable, and sometimes that which is reasonable and right ? Has he any *inducement* to do this ? Previous to the act of choice, is there any

thing which has a *tendency* to incline the will one way rather than another? If there is any such tendency, it must lie either in the will itself, or in that which is agreeable, or in that which is reasonable, or in something else. Is the will so constituted by nature, that independently of any inducement, without itself, it tends to go in one direction rather than another? Is the diversity of its volitions to be ascribed to *changes* to which it is subject? If so, do these changes take place without any cause? Is the will, while impartial and indifferent in itself, *induced* to make a particular choice, either by that which is agreeable, or by that which is reasonable? If these have any tendency to incline the will, is the tendency of the two always *equal*? If there are equal influences in opposite directions, what is it that makes one prevail over the other? If they are *unequal*, does that which has the *least* tendency to turn the will, ever gain the ascendancy over the other, while it still continues inferior? It is easy to see, that there may be from time to time, many *changes* in that which appears agreeable, and in that which appears reasonable; so that, in consequence of these changes, sometimes one of these motives may preponderate, and sometimes the other. Or if there is *any thing else* which has the influence of a motive, it may, by concurring with one of these, turn the scale.

If there is nothing, either in the will itself, or in any thing else, which has a tendency to turn it in one direction rather than another; then all its volitions are under the uncontrollable dominion of chance; neither persuasion nor argument, neither natural propensities nor education, neither promises nor threatenings, neither consci-

ence nor law, neither human nor divine government, neither the dread of poverty and disgrace, nor the allurements of office, and distinction, and opulence, neither considerations of compassion, of benevolence, of justice, or of patriotism ; neither the word nor the Spirit of God, neither the mercies and judgments of the present life, nor the retributions of that which is to come, can do any thing more than furnish an opportunity to the will, to exercise its sovereign prerogative of arbitrary volition ; they can be of no avail in giving direction to choice.

SECTION XI.

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF VOLITIONS.

The scriptures contain numerous *predictions* of the moral actions of men, and of events depending on these actions—The *immutability* of God implies a perfect knowledge of all future events—Has Edwards blended scriptural authority with abstract reasoning?—Are *suppositions* the foundation of all pure science?—*Practical* knowledge is founded on *realities*—Does foreknowledge imply necessity of any kind?—If volitions are foreknown by God, their future existence is infallibly certain—If they were, in the absolute sense, contingent, they could not be certainly foreknown; there would be neither *intuitive* evidence, nor any other evidence of their future existence—Is God's knowledge independent of evidence?—The certain foreknowledge of an event implies an *impossibility* of its failing to come to pass—Decrees or purposes of God—Is God's knowledge of the *future* different from his knowledge of the *present*?—*Limited* signification of impossibility—What is the meaning, when it is said, that a man *could* do that which it is certain he will not do—Do the divine purposes render the use of means unavailing?—*Recapitulation* of the principles contained in the second part of Edwards's work.

NEAR the close of his second book, Edwards has introduced a separate argument, on the point under discussion, founded on God's foreknowledge of volitions. In the eleventh section, he undertakes to prove "that God has certain foreknowledge of the voluntary acts of moral agents." It may well excite our surprise, that there should be a doubt on this point, in the minds of any who have read the scriptures, with even ordinary attention. But the doctrine presses so hard upon the favorite theories of some philosophers, that they will not yield their assent to it, except upon the most incontro-

vertible evidence. Edwards has laid before us a superabundant accumulation of such evidence, contained in the scriptures.

Dugald Stewart inquires, "Shall we venture to affirm that it exceeds the power of God, to permit such a train of contingent events to take place, as his own foreknowledge shall not extend to?" The question with which we are concerned, is not so much, whether he has the *power* to do this, as whether he has *actually* done it. So much as this, he certainly knows. And what has he told us concerning it, in his word? He has often *predicted*, as Edwards has abundantly shewn, the moral conduct of men, their virtues and vices, and the events which are *dependent* on their moral actions, the future conduct of *nations* and bodies of men, together with the consequent *events*, which could not be foreknown, if the *volitions* of men could not be foreseen. A very great portion of the prophecies of the Old Testament, relate to the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah, which consists not of things external, but of the dominion of virtue in the *hearts* of men. "If God has not a prescience of the future actions of moral agents, it will follow that the prophecies of scripture *in general* are without foreknowledge: For almost all of them are either predictions of the actings and behavior of moral agents, or of events *depending* on them.—Almost all events belonging to the future state of the world of mankind, the changes and revolutions which come to pass in empires, kingdoms, and nations, depend, innumerable ways, on the acts of men's wills.—Such is the state and course of things, in the world of mankind, that one single event, which appears in itself exceeding inconsider-

able, may, in the progress and series of things, occasion a succession of the greatest, and most important, and extensive events; causing the state of mankind to be vastly different from what it would otherwise have been for all succeeding generations.—Unless God foreknows the volitions of moral agents, all the prophecies of scripture have no better foundation than mere conjecture; and that, in most instances, a conjecture which must have the utmost uncertainty; depending on an innumerable, and as it were infinite multitude of volitions, which are all, even to God, uncertain events. However, these prophecies are delivered as absolute predictions, and very many of them, in the most positive manner with asseverations; and some of them with the most solemn oaths.”

If God can not foresee the volitions of his creatures, “He must be a being, who instead of being absolutely *immutable*, must necessarily be the subject of infinitely the most numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of any being whatsoever; for this plain reason, that his vastly extensive charge comprehends an infinitely greater number of those things which are to him contingent and uncertain. If He can not *foreknow* the voluntary acts of moral agents, He can not *foretell* them; that is, He can not peremptorily and certainly foretell them.—Positively to foretell, is to profess to foreknow, or to declare positive foreknowledge.”

“If God does not certainly foreknow the future volitions of moral agents, then neither can He certainly foreknow those *events* which are consequent and dependent on these volitions. The existence of the one depending on the existence of the other, the *knowledge*

of the existence of the one depends on the knowledge of the existence of the other ; and the one can not be more certain than the other. Therefore, how many, how great, and how extensive soever, the consequences of the volitions of moral agents may be ; though they should extend to an alteration of the state of things through the universe, and should be continued, in a series of events, to all eternity ; and should, in the progress of things, branch forth into an infinite number of series, each of them going on in an endless line or chain of events ; God must be as ignorant of all these consequences, as He is of the volition whence they first take their rise. All these events, and the whole state of things depending on them, how important, extensive, and vast soever, must be hid from him."

To Edwards's method of discussing the subject of the will, the objection has been made, that he *brings together* modes of investigation which will not coalesce, and which ought be kept distinct. He is charged with blending the *authority of revelation*, with the abstractions of the "higher metaphysics."* The latter, it is claimed, should be considered, like the pure mathematics, as a science by itself, having no dependence upon any other department of knowledge. A science strictly demonstrative, it is said, should contain all the elements of its composition within itself ; deriving no part of its support from without. It should not even be founded upon *facts* ; upon any of the realities of either the material or the mental world. It should be based upon *suppositions* only ; and its structure should consist of nothing but demonstrations deriving certain conclusions

* See Isaac Taylor's Essay on Abstract Reasoning, pp. 21, 129, 154.

from these suppositions. The whole science may be justly considered as hypothetical; the conclusions being true, as realities, only on the condition that the suppositions correspond with facts. This is the case with the pure mathematics. Facts are not admitted as forming any part of the foundation or the superstructure. The whole science is built upon suppositions, commonly expressed in the form of definitions. The axioms come in as the cement which binds the parts together. Such, it is said, ought to be the character of every pure science. It should not be adulterated with an intermixture of facts. It should rise above the realities of life, and keep its place in the elevated region of hypothetical abstractions.

But if all this be true, as ought, perhaps, to be admitted, what *practical* value, one may naturally enough inquire, can there be, in such visionary speculations? Of what use can they be, except as forming a philosophical romance, to relieve the dullness of a vacant hour; or as a gymnastic exercise of the intellect, like a contest of skill on a chess-board, where unreal kings and queens, by their deep planned marches and countermarches, play their games of war and conquest? The proper answer to this inquiry is, that the practical utility of these abstractions, consists in their *application* to facts, to the realities of matter and mind. It is this which renders mathematical science of such incalculable value, in the business and arts of real life. The demonstrations in Euclid are founded on *supposed* triangles, circles, squares, &c. But they are equally applicable to *real* triangles, circles, &c., wherever they may be found. A demonstration will stand as firmly on a *fact*, as on a *supposi-*

tion. The imperfection in the application of pure geometry to practical concerns, is owing to the difficulty of determining with certainty, whether a real figure exactly coincides with the supposed one ; whether that which appears to be a circle, does not, in any part, differ, a hair's breadth from the *definition* of a circle.

The methods of obtaining the *evidence* of facts, are so different from the logical processes in abstract reasoning, that one of these departments of investigation, ought not to be so blended with the other, as to prevent the distinction between them from being kept clearly in view. In giving elementary instruction, there may be an advantage in separating them entirely, till the learner has become familiar with the characteristic difference between them. But it by no means follows from this, that they are never to be brought together. The utility of each depends on the union of the two. Accordingly, in works on the physical sciences, and the practical arts, mathematical reasoning is abundantly applied to facts ascertained by observation and experiment. The carpenter may find it convenient to prepare and adjust the timbers for an edifice, at a distance from the spot where the mason is laying the foundation. But when the building is to be erected for use, the frame-work and the masonry must be brought together.

Metaphysical investigation, as well as the pure mathematics, may be treated as a subject of mere speculation ; founding all its reasonings upon suppositions, and leading to conclusions which have no other reality, than a logical connection with the principles supposed. It is only when applied to facts, to physical or mental phenomena, that it becomes a science of practical value.

In no part of his work on the Will, has President Edwards availed himself of *scriptural* authority, to a greater extent, than in the portion now under consideration, on God's foreknowledge of volitions. But so far is he from having given, in this part at least, any just ground for the charge of *blending* metaphysical reasoning with evidence derived from revelation, that he has placed them in different sections. His purpose required, that a *fact* should be proved, the foreknowledge of God, and that, from this fact, a *conclusion* should be drawn, respecting the infallible certainty of volitions. In the eleventh section, the fact is established by scriptural authority. In the twelfth, the conclusion is obtained, by logical deduction. The two processes are brought together, only so far as this, that one is the foundation upon which the other is made to rest. When the foreknowledge of God is fully ascertained, by any kind of evidence whatever, a logical inference may as fairly be drawn from it, as if it were only *supposed* to be what it really is.

It is not to be expected, that the appeal to the testimony of scripture, will be admitted as satisfactory by the *infidel*. In this part of his Essay, Edwards considers himself as "having to do with such as own the truth of the Bible." His work was not written for infidels *alone*. The argument from prescience is only one among many. Some parts of the work are sufficiently metaphysical, one would think, to satisfy even those who are not believers in Christianity.

"Having proved that God has a certain and infallible prescience of the acts of the will of moral agents," Edwards proceeds to shew "how it follows from hence, that

these events are *necessary*, with a necessity of connection or consequence." To avoid the very common misapprehension of his views on this point, it is important to keep in mind the *meaning* which he gives to the word necessity, in this discussion. It is not the *common* signification, something which is or may be *opposed* to the will of the agent. For he is very explicit in stating repeatedly, that it is absurd to think, than an act of will can be opposed to that necessity which consists either in the certainty of the volitions, or in that upon which this certainty depends. This would imply, that a volition can be opposed to *itself*; that the man is unwilling to choose as he actually chooses. The necessity of which he is speaking in this section, is that which he terms metaphysical or philosophical necessity. It is necessity falsely so called. "It is nothing different from certainty, the certainty that is in *things themselves*, which is the foundation of the certainty of the *knowledge* of them.—It is nothing else than the full and fixed connection between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be true." It may be the certainty either of the *existence* of that which is spoken of, or of its *connection* with something preceding. The latter is that which Edwards calls *consequential* necessity.*

In the section now under consideration, he takes *three different views* of the certainty, or as he calls it, the necessity of volitions.

In the first place, he undertakes to shew, that the future existence of the volitions of moral agents is necessary, that is, certain, because there is an infallible *con-*

* Part I, Sec. 3 and 4.

nection between those events and the divine *foreknowledge*. This foreknowledge is now necessary, because it "already *has*, and long ago *had* existence.—It is now impossible, that it should be otherwise than true, that it has existed.—It is no less evident, that if there be a full, certain, and infallible knowledge of the future existence of the volitions of moral agents, then there is a certain, infallible, and indissoluble *connection* between those events and that foreknowledge.—To say, the foreknowledge is certain and infallible, and yet the connection of the event with that foreknowledge is not indissoluble, but dissoluble and fallible, is very absurd. To affirm it, would be the same thing as to affirm, that there is no necessary connection between a proposition's being infallibly known to be true, and its being true indeed.—It is also very manifest, that those things which are indissolubly connected with other things that are necessary, are themselves necessary; as that proposition whose truth is necessarily connected with another proposition which is necessarily true, is itself necessarily true. To say otherwise, would be a contradiction. It would be in effect to say, that the connection was indissoluble, and yet was not so, but might be broken.—So that it is perfectly demonstrable, that if there be any infallible knowledge of future volitions, the event is *necessary*; or, in other words, that it is *impossible* but the event should come to pass." That is, it is impossible, *all things considered*. In a *limited* sense, there may be a possibility of the contrary; but no such possibility as is inconsistent with the infallible certainty of the event.

In this first view which Edwards takes of God's foreknowledge of volitions, his object is simply to prove, from this foreknowledge, that the *existence* of the volitions is necessary, that is, infallibly certain. He does not here undertake to shew how they are *rendered* certain, by antecedent causes, motives, &c. Of those who agree with him thus far, there are two classes; one of which supposes that God has a perfect knowledge of future volitions, by his seeing all the trains of antecedents on which they depend. The other class holds, that He foresees volitions as *contingent*, as not rendered certain by any preceding influence. These two opinions, he proceeds to consider separately, adopting the first as his own. He maintains,

Secondly, "That no future event *can* be certainly foreknown, whose existence is contingent, and without all necessity." His argument on this point, if we may judge from the representations frequently given of it, is not always rightly apprehended. He is supposed to have overlooked the *intuitive* evidence which it is said the nature of the case furnishes to the divine mind; and to have confined his attention to *deductive* proof, derived from the causes of events. God, it is affirmed, sees all things *immediately*. The past, the present, and the future, are all equally clear to his view. He has no occasion to draw conclusions from premises. Now the fact is, that Edwards, in discussing the point under consideration, speaks particularly of intuitive evidence. "If there be any future event," he observes, "whose existence is contingent, without all necessity, the future existence of that event is absolutely *without evidence*. If there be any evidence of it, it must be one of these *two*

sorts, either *self-evidence*, or *proof*; for there can be no other sort of evidence, but one of these two; an evident thing must be either evident *in itself*, or evident in *something else*, that is, evident by *connection* with something else. But a future thing whose existence is without all necessity, can have *neither* of these sorts of evidence. It can not be *self-evident*: for if it be, it may be now known, by what is now to be seen in the thing itself; either its present existence, or the necessity of its nature: But both these are contrary to the supposition."

Edwards does not deny the power of God to see *intuitively* every thing which there is to be seen. But in the case of a future contingent event, there is nothing to be seen. It has no present existence; nor is it of such a nature, as to render its future existence necessary. "No understanding, created or uncreated, can see evidence where there is none. For that is the same thing, as to see that to be which is not."

Having stated, that there is no *self-evidence* in the case supposed, he adds, "Neither is there any *proof*, or evidence in *any thing else*, or evidence of *connection* with something else that is evident; for this also is contrary to the supposition." To illustrate his position by an example, he supposes that, at a particular time, something has "started out of nothing into being,—all in absolute contingency, without any manner of ground or reason of its existence; or any *dependence* upon, or *connection* at all with any thing foregoing: I say, that if this be supposed, there was no evidence of that event beforehand. There was no evidence of it to be seen *in the thing itself*; for the thing itself, as yet, was not. And there was no evidence of it to be seen *in any thing*

else ; for evidence in something else, is *connection with* something else, but such connection is contrary to the supposition. There was no evidence before, that this thing *would happen* ; for by the supposition, there was no reason why it *should* happen, rather than something else, or rather than nothing.—The thing was absolutely without evidence, and absolutely unknowable. An increase of *understanding*, or of the capacity of discerning, has no tendency, and makes no advance, to a discerning any signs or evidences of it, let it be increased ever so much ; yea, if it be increased *infinitely*. The increase of the strength of *sight* may have a tendency to enable to discern the evidence which is far off, and very much hid, and deeply involved in clouds and darkness ; but it has no tendency to enable to discern evidence where there is none.—On the contrary, it has a tendency to enable to discern, with great certainty, that *there is none*."

It is urged by some, that to affirm that it is impossible for a thing to be certainly known to God *without evidence*, is to represent the omniscient mind as dependent for its knowledge on some *medium* of proof ; as drawing conclusions from premises only. Finite minds can know only by evidence. But God intuitively sees every thing *as it is in itself*. He has no occasion for the logical process of *inferring* one thing from another, of deducing truth from evidence.

To this, it may be replied, that what is meant by the expression *intuitive evidence* or self-evidence, is *the very thing which is seen to be true*. It is not something *distinct* from the truth which is the object of knowledge ; a *medium* by which it is made known. It is *the very*

truth itself. A mathematical axiom is not seen to be true, by means of any evidence distinct from itself; by any inference drawn from premises. When, therefore, President Edwards asserts, that if there be any evidence of a future contingent event, it must be either *self-evidence* or *proof*, he explains himself to mean, that it must be either evident *in itself*, or evident *in something else*. Self-evidence of such an event is the real and infallible futurity of the event itself.

Thirdly; in the remaining view which Edwards takes of the divine foreknowledge of human volitions, he admits, for argument's sake, the position of his opponents, that God can foresee events which have no dependence, for being what they are, upon any thing preceding. Although, in his own opinion, no event *can* be foreseen which is entirely independent of every thing preceding; and although the certain *existence* of any change whatever implies, in his view, certain *connection* with its causes; yet he here meets the objector upon his own assumption.

To understand correctly this part of the discussion, it is important to bear in mind, that Edwards applies the term *necessity* both to the certain *existence* of an event, and to its certain *connection* with its causes; as has already, I trust, been fully shewn.* His definition of philosophical necessity is, "The full and fixed connection between the things signified by the subject and predicate of a proposition which affirms something to be true." Now what is affirmed in the proposition, may be either the *certain existence* of something, or its *certain connection* with something else on which it depends.

* See Section II.

In his own view, one of these always implies the other. But as his opponents deny this, when he comes to argue with them on their own principles, he uses the term necessity to signify the future *certain existence* of an event, without any particular reference to a cause.

A similar remark is to be made, with respect to his use of the term *contingence*, in this part of the section. Contingence is the opposite of necessity. If the necessity spoken of be the *certain connection* between an effect and its cause, the contingency opposed to this implies the absence of a cause. If the necessity under consideration be the *certain existence* of an event, the opposite contingency is uncertainty.

"To suppose," says Edwards, "the future volitions of moral agents not to be necessary events; or, which is the same thing, events which *it is not impossible* but that they may not come to pass; and yet to suppose, that God certainly foreknows them, and knows all things; is to suppose God's knowledge to be inconsistent with itself. For to say, that God certainly, and without all conjecture, knows that a thing will infallibly be, which, at the same time, he knows to be so contingent, that it may possibly not be, is to suppose his knowledge inconsistent with itself; or that one thing that He knows is utterly inconsistent with another thing that He knows. It is the same thing as to say, He now knows a proposition to be of certain, infallible truth, which He knows to be of contingent, uncertain truth."

It is said, that we are not warranted in concluding, that God can not certainly foresee a contingent event, because we are unable to explain *how* He can foresee it. Very true. But we may reasonably inquire, how

He can know that to be certain which is *not* certain ; how He can see events to be certainly future, while they are *not* certainly future. "To say in such a case," says Edwards, "that God may have ways of knowing contingent events which we can not conceive of, is ridiculous ; as much so, as to say, that God may know *contradictions* to be true, for aught we know ; or that He may know a thing to be certain, and at the same time, know it *not* to be certain, though we can not conceive how, because He has ways of knowing which we can not comprehend."

The object of Edwards, in this third view which he has taken of foreknowledge, is not to prove, that an event which is foreknown must have an *adequate cause*. That he had undertaken to shew, under his *second* head. What he is now aiming at, is to meet those who deny the conclusions which he had there drawn ; and to shew, that from the perfect foreknowledge of God which they themselves admit, it follows that the existence of all future events is necessary, in the sense of being infallibly certain ; and this, whether they are, or are not necessary, in the sense of being dependent upon any thing preceding.

From this last view of foreknowledge, he draws the inference, "that the absolute *decrees* of God are no more inconsistent with human liberty, on account of any *necessity* of the event which follows from such decrees, than the absolute foreknowledge of God." We are, by no means, to conclude from this, that he makes *no distinction* between foreknowledge and decree or purpose. He fully admits, that the one does not, like the other, cause an event to be certain. But he maintains, that

"the connection between the event and certain foreknowledge is as *infallible* and indissoluble, as between the event and an absolute decree." This connection is absolutely perfect, "because, by the supposition, the certainty and infallibility of the *knowledge* is absolutely perfect." We are to bear in mind, that, in this part of the discussion, he uses the term necessity, as applied to future events, to signify the *certainty* of their future existence. Remarking on the assertion of Dr. Whitby, "that God's prescience *renders* no actions necessary," he observes, "Whether prescience be the thing which *makes* the event necessary or no, it alters not the case. Infallible foreknowledge may *prove* the necessity of the event foreknown, and yet not be the thing which *causes* the necessity.—All certain knowledge, whether it be foreknowledge, or after knowledge, or concomitant knowledge, proves the thing known now to be necessary, by some means or other; or proves that it is impossible it should now be otherwise than true.—Certainty of *knowledge* is nothing else but knowing or discerning the certainty there is in the *things themselves* which are known. Therefore there must be a certainty in things, to be a ground of certainty of knowledge, and to render things capable of being known to be certain. And this is nothing but the necessity of the truth known, or its being impossible but that it should be true; or, in other words, the firm and infallible connection between the subject and predicate of the proposition that contains that truth.—If God certainly knows the future existence of an event which is wholly contingent, and may possibly never be, then He sees a firm connection between a subject and predicate that are not firmly connected; which is a contradiction."

"Mere knowledge does not affect the thing known, to *make* it more certain or more future. But yet it *supposes* and *proves* the thing to be, *already*, both future and certain; that is, necessarily future. Knowledge of futurity supposes futurity; and a *certain knowledge* of futurity supposes *certain futurity*, antecedent to that certain knowledge. But there is no other certain futurity of a thing, antecedent to certainty of knowledge, than a prior impossibility but that the thing should prove true; or, (which is the same thing,) the necessity of the event." "We do not pretend," says the younger Edwards, "from the divine prescience to prove, that thereby things unavoidably *become* necessary, or certainly future. But we do pretend, from prescience, to prove, that all events *were* certainly future, in the order of nature, antecedently to the prescience; and that they are certainly future, in the order of time, antecedently to their existence."

"Mere *certainly of event*," says Dr. Samuel Clarke, "does not, in any measure, imply necessity." But certainty of event is the *very thing* which President Edwards, in speaking on this point, means by necessity. Some writers assert, "That when we talk of foreknowledge in God, there is no strict propriety in our so speaking: and that although it be true, that there is in God the most perfect knowledge of all events from eternity to eternity, yet there is no such thing as *before* and *after* in God, but He sees all things by one perfect, unchangeable view, without any succession." On this, Edwards observes; "If strictly speaking, there is no foreknowledge in God, it is because those things which are future to us, are as present to God, as if they already had exist-

ence : and that is as much as to say, that future events are always, in God's view, as evident, clear, sure, and necessary, as if they already were.—This is so far from weakening the proof which has been given of the impossibility of the not coming to pass of future events known, as that it establishes that wherein the strength of the foregoing argument consists, and shews the clearness of the evidence. For, the very reason why God's knowledge is without succession, is because it is absolutely perfect, to the highest possible degree of clearness and certainty : all things, whether past, present, or to come, being viewed with equal evidence and fullness.—Herein consists the strength of the demonstration before given, of the impossibility of the not existing of those things whose existence God knows ; that it is as impossible they should fail of existence, as if they existed already.—It is the *immutability* of knowledge, that makes His knowledge to be without succession. But this most directly and plainly demonstrates the thing I insist on, viz. that it is utterly impossible the known events should fail of existence. For if that were possible, then it would be possible for there to be a change in God's knowledge and view of things.—On the whole, I need not fear to say, that there is no geometrical theorem or proposition whatsoever more capable of strict demonstration, than that God's certain prescience of the volitions of moral agents, is inconsistent with such a contingency of these events as is without *all* necessity ;" that is, either a sure *connection* between the volitions and their causes, or an infallible certainty of the *volitions themselves*.

One of the arguments most frequently adduced to prove, that the commonly received doctrine of the divine decrees or purposes is inconsistent with the liberty of the will, is this, that decrees giving direction to particular volitions would render *opposite volitions impossible*. It is true, that, what is infallibly fixed by a divine purpose can not be changed. But it is equally true, that what is infallibly fixed in the divine *foreknowledge* can not be changed. Though the certain foreknowledge of an event may not, like a decree, *render* the opposite event impossible, yet the one, as fully as the other, *proves* it to be impossible, all things considered. If it be proper to give to the term possible a *limited* meaning, as referring to a *part* only of the considerations on which the certainty of an event depends; in this qualified sense, it may be admitted, that it is possible, when it is certain that it will not take place. If a man has, in any sense, a *power* to put forth, at a given time, a volition opposite to that which it is certain he will actually put forth, at the time; it is such a kind or degree of power, as will be unavailing to effect the change supposed. It is not a power which will give a different direction to the will. If the volition is *rendered* certain, by a dependence on its causes, then the power spoken of does not reach and direct all these causes. If the certainty of the act is *independent* of every cause, then it does not belong to power, however great, to change the volition; for power has always relation to a cause. If acts of the will are not affected by causes, they are not affected by power.

When, in the language of common life, we say, that a man *could* do what we are sure he will not do; we mean, that he could *if he would*. But what can be the

meaning, when it is said, that he can *will* that which he certainly will not will? Is nothing more intended, than the identical proposition, that if *he should* will differently he would? Or is this the meaning, that he can will one way or another, according to the influence which directs his choice? Or are we to understand the assertion to signify, that the will is so evenly balanced, that it will turn this way or the contrary, regardless of all influence whatever?

The objection which is urged against the extension of the divine purposes to the volitions of men, that it would render *the use of means unavailing*, is equally applicable to certain foreknowledge. Acts of the will which are foreknown are certain, either *without* means, or *by* means. If they are certain without means, then means can have no influence to change them. If their certain existence depends, in any respect, on the agency of means, then the omniscient Being who foresees the volitions, foresees also the means by which they will be brought into being. It may be said, that other means *may* be used, with a different result. But He who foresees the event to be certain, foresees that means adequate to change the result will *not* be used. There is no avoiding this conclusion, unless we adopt the logic of the man who declared, that if he could *certainly know* the time and place of his death, he would be far from that place, at that time. Whatever result the measures actually used will secure, that is the very result which is foreseen by God. The means and the end are objects of the same perfect foreknowledge. They are both equally certain. No endeavors of men or of angels, will be sufficient to change an event which is

infallibly foreknown. If any measures will actually terminate in a result contrary to that which is *supposed* to be foreseen, then this contrary result, and not the other, is the one really foreseen.

Recapitulation.—Before entering on an examination of the third book of Edwards's work on the Will, there may be an advantage in briefly recapitulating the points which he has endeavored to establish, in the part which we have just been reviewing. It has been already stated, that the object of his inquiry was not to determine whether it is the *man himself* that wills. The very definition with which he commences his work implies, that it is the agent, the mind, that chooses. "The will is plainly that by which the *mind* chooses any thing.—In every act of the will whatsoever, the *mind* chooses one thing rather than another." If this is all that is meant by some writers, in earnestly contending that a man is the *cause* of his own volitions, Edwards has no controversy with them, on this point; unless it may be as to the propriety of this application of the term; calling that a *cause* of an act, which, in his view, is implied in the nature of the act itself.

On the other hand, his opponents, some of them at least, may agree with him in ascribing to the previous state of mind an influence, in determining which way the agent will choose. But the point in issue is, Whether the direction which the choice takes is affected by any thing *exterior* to the mind of the agent. If it is not, then it must be determined either by something *within* the mind, or by *nothing*. If by the former, this must be either a previous *volition*, or *act*, or *affection*, or *state*,

or the *nature* of the mind. But if each of these, and every thing else within the mind, is an effect which requires a cause; then by tracing back the series, we must ultimately come to a cause which is *not* within the mind. This conclusion can not be avoided, by ascribing the direction of choice to the *power* of choosing; for an equal power of contrary choice, can not be the sole reason why one volition is put forth *rather* than another. Besides, the exercise of the power of willing, is the same thing as an *act* of the will. And if a particular act of will is determined by an act of will, this must be either a *preceding* act, or *the very act* which is itself determined. On the latter supposition, this act is the cause of itself, or rather, is without any cause whatever.

But according to Edwards, a volition has a cause *antecedent* to itself; antecedent to the agency of the mind in putting it forth. There is a cause, not only of a man's willing, but of his willing *one way rather than another*. From a given cause, or combination of causes, using the term in its broad signification, to include *all* the antecedents on which the choice depends, a particular volition will *certainly* follow. These antecedents are something more than mere causes *sine qua non*, only giving an *opportunity* for the will to act. They have a real influence, in determining to which side the choice will turn. The causes of volition determine not only that there shall *be* a choice, but *what* it shall be. Every thing which takes place must have a cause, not only of its *existence*, but of the *nature* and *manner* of its existence. The cause must be *answerable* to the effect. If the direction of a man's choice is to be ascribed to the

state of his mind, this mental state must have had a cause. None of our acts, perceptions, affections, propensities, or habits have their origin in chance. They are dependent, either immediately or remotely, upon something *without* the mind.

But what *are* the causes and influences which give direction to choice? According to Edwards, the human mind is of such a nature, and is placed in such circumstances, that it will certainly *be pleased* with some of the objects which are presented to its view, and displeased with others. With some, it will be *more* pleased, than with others. Those with which it is *most* pleased, it will desire to obtain. This will stimulate to such mental and bodily actions as are dependent on the will. *Imperative* acts of choice, therefore, are prompted and directed by our desires, affections, or emotions. The affections themselves are excited by objects which have particular relations to the nature, and state, and temper of the mind.

A man is in the enjoyment of *external liberty*, when there is nothing to prevent his imperative volitions from being carried into effect. He is *always* in possession of liberty of *will*, because nothing can prevent him from choosing as he pleases, so long as he chooses at all. His imperative volitions correspond with his prevailing inclinations;—with what is to him the greatest apparent good. His emotions, which are considered by some as acts of will, are so far from being contrary to his pleasure, that his pleasure *consists* of emotions. But a man has not the liberty of perfect *indifference* to all the objects around him. He has not such a liberty that he ever chooses in opposition to all the influence under

which he is placed. He has not the liberty of directing *every* act of choice by a *preceding* volition. He has not, in the opinion of Edwards, that which is called by some the *liberty of contingency*; implying that our acts of will are determined to be as they are, by no cause whatever.

Have we *the power of contrary volition*? In one signification of the expression, we have. If the term power be here confined to the *faculty* of willing; of choosing according to the influence under which we act; we have *this* power to the contrary, even when our choice is most firmly fixed on a particular object. This means nothing more than that the will is of such a nature, that *under a different influence*, it might make a different choice. The faculty of willing, of itself alone, gives no *direction* to volition. If the power spoken of be understood to include not only the faculty of choosing, but *inclination and influence*, it is not true, that in this sense, the will is equally balanced between good and evil, between right and wrong, between heaven and earth.

Edwards has shewn, that *motives* have a determining influence upon the will. They are not merely objects or occasions of choice, which do nothing more than furnish an *opportunity* for the mind to choose. Though they are not the cause of volitions without an agent, yet they *give a direction*, to the agency of the will. *External* motives do not, of themselves alone, determine what a man's choice will be. But motives, in the broad sense in which Edwards uses the term, including the state and feelings of the mind, have a real efficacy in directing the consequent acts of the will. A man

does not give to motives all their power, by previous volitions, by *choosing* whether they shall have influence with him or not. There is a difference in the *strength* of motives. Some have a greater influence on the will than others; a greater tendency to turn it in a particular direction. Not that there are certain objects which are invariably stronger motives than others to *all minds*, or even to the same mind, at all times. But among the motives which are before the mind of a man, at any given time, some have a more powerful influence than others, in determining his choice. That which has a greater tendency to move the will, than all opposing motives, will actually prevail. A man does not, by a previous act of will, *give* to each motive the particular degree of strength which it has.

The Creator and Governor of the universe, has a perfect *foreknowledge* of the volitions of all his creatures. From this, it follows, that the future existence of these volitions is infallibly certain. From God's foreknowledge of human volitions, Edwards has also undertaken to prove, that for being as they are, they are *dependent* on something preceding. But whether the validity of this argument be admitted or not, it is evident, that what is certainly foreknown is so infallibly fixed, that, all things considered, it is *impossible* it should be otherwise than God sees that it will be; and therefore, that no means whatever which will actually be used, will lead to a different result.

If these things be so, some may be ready to say; if the reasoning of Edwards has fully established the position, that there is an infallible connection between human volitions and the antecedents on which they depend; if

there is no escaping from his conclusions, but by misapprehending or perverting his arguments; then has he effectually sapped the foundations of moral accountability; by maintaining the necessity of man's acts of will, he has released him from obligation; has absolved him from the claims of conscience and law. A necessary agent, it is confidently affirmed, is a contradiction in terms. Those who are impatient to free themselves from the demands of moral obligation, sometimes accompany Edwards to the middle of his work; but take their leave of him, when, in his third book, he proceeds to inquire, "Whether any *such* liberty of will as Arminians hold, be necessary to MORAL AGENCY, VIRTUE AND VICE, PRAISE AND DISPRAISE, &c."

SECTION XII.

MORAL AGENCY NOT INCONSISTENT WITH
ALL NECESSITY.

Moral agency not inconsistent with all necessity—God's moral excellence, though necessary, is yet virtuous—Authority of Dr. Samuel Clarke—In what sense, is it impossible for God to do wrong?—Are *all* things necessary?—Is it desirable that human volitions should depend primarily on chance, rather than on infinite wisdom and goodness?—Origin of evil—Acts of the human soul of Jesus Christ—Case of those who are given up to sin.

IN entering on the inquiry in his third book, Edwards first endeavors to shew, that God's moral excellence is necessary, and yet virtuous and praiseworthy. "Arminians," he says, "so far as I have had opportunity to observe, generally acknowledge that God is necessarily holy, and his will necessarily determined to that which is good." Dr. Samuel Clarke has indeed undertaken to shew, that the self-existent and original cause of all things, is not subject to what he calls "an absolute and strict *natural* necessity." But he admits that it is "consistent with the most perfect liberty and choice, that God should be *unalterably determined*, by the perfection and rectitude of his will, to do always what is best on the whole."* Now this is precisely what Edwards means by moral necessity, in reference to the Supreme Being. It is the *infallible certainty*, that his will will be perfectly and invariably right. It implies no dependence

* Being and Attributes, Prop. IX.

on any thing else, except his own infinite wisdom and goodness. Dr. Clarke has himself undertaken to shew, that the "Supreme Cause and Author of all things must, *of necessity*, be infinitely wise; and a being of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, and all other moral perfections.—Though all the actions of God," he observes, "are entirely *free*; and consequently, the exercise of his moral attributes can not be said to be necessary, in the same sense of necessity as his existence and eternity are necessary; yet these moral attributes are *really and truly* necessary, by such a necessity, as, though it be not at all inconsistent with liberty, yet is *equally certain, infallible*, and to be depended upon, as even the existence itself, or the eternity of God.—Though nothing is more certain, than that God acts not necessarily, but voluntarily; yet it is as *truly and absolutely impossible* for God not to do (or to do any thing contrary to) what his moral attributes require him to do, as if he was really not a free, but a necessary agent. And the reason hereof is plain: Because infinite knowledge, power, and goodness, in conjunction, may, notwithstanding the most perfect freedom and choice, act with altogether as much *certainty and unalterable steadiness*, as even the necessity of fate can be supposed to do. Nay, these perfections can not possibly but so act.—We may therefore as certainly and infallibly rely upon the *moral*, as upon the *natural* attributes of God: It being as absolutely impossible for him to act contrary to the one, as to divest himself of the other. The one is contrary to the immediate and absolute necessity of His nature; the other, to the unalterable rectitude of His will."*

* Being and Attributes, Prop. XII.

If it be true, that the holiness of God is in *any* sense necessary ; and if it be also true, that *all* necessity is inconsistent with moral agency, virtue, desert of praise, &c., then, as Edwards observes, "The infinitely holy God, who always used to be esteemed, by God's people, not only virtuous, but a being in whom is all possible virtue, and every virtue in the most absolute purity and perfection, and in infinitely greater brightness and amiableness than in any creature ; the most perfect pattern of virtue, and the fountain from whom all others' virtue is but as beams from the sun ; and who has been supposed to be, on the account of his virtue and holiness, infinitely more worthy to be esteemed, loved, honored, admired, commended, extolled, and praised, than any creature ; and He who is thus every where represented in scripture ; I say, this Being, according to this notion of Dr. Whitby, and other Arminians, has no virtue at all ; virtue, when ascribed to him, is but an *empty name* ; and He is deserving of no commendation or praise, because He is under necessity ; He can not avoid being holy and Good as He is."

It may be said, perhaps, that to suppose it *impossible* for God to choose otherwise than He does, is *limiting his power* ; that to affirm, that the only reason why He does not do wrong is that He *can not*, is derogatory to his character. Now all the apparent difficulty in this case, lies in the ambiguity of the terms impossible, can not, &c. The objection might be brought, with equal propriety, against the assertion of the scriptures, that "*it is impossible for God to lie.*" If the words power, possibility, &c., be understood according to their more common acceptation, to refer to strength of intellect,

and a capacity of producing effects in matter and mind ; it certainly is *not true*, that in this limited sense, God can not practice deception. It requires no more intellectual power, to speak falsehood than to state the truth. But if the term ability be taken in the broad signification, so as to include *inclination*, as well as strength of understanding, it is not saying any thing derogatory to the character of God, to affirm that He has not *this* ability to do wrong. There is nothing in his nature which will ever *incline* Him to depart from perfect rectitude. On the contrary, there is that in his being and attributes which will forever and invariably determine Him to do right. There is as absolute a certainty that He will never do wrong, as that He will never cease to exist. This certainty is what Edwards means by the moral necessity of the divine nature. Will any one affirm that this certainty does not exist ? If it be thought improper to call it *necessity*, I have no controversy with any one on this point. But is *such* an inability an imperfection in the character of the Most High ? Does it imply any want of freedom, that "He *can not* but do always what is best and wisest in the whole ; that He *can not possibly* do any thing that is evil ; that an infinitely wise and good being can not act in contradiction to wisdom and goodness?" "It is no diminution of power," says Dr. Clarke, "not to be able to *do* things which are no object of power : And it is in like manner no diminution either of power or liberty, to have such a perfect and unalterable rectitude of will, as never possibly to *choose* to do any thing inconsistent with that rectitude."

To Edwards's view of the necessity of the divine will, it is objected, that on this supposition, *every thing in the universe is necessary*; nothing in heaven or on earth could possibly have been different from what it is. The eternal *existence* of the Supreme Being, his infinite *intelligence*, and *power*, and *goodness*, are necessary. If his infinitely benevolent *will* is necessarily implied in his other attributes; then all that is in God is necessary. And if all other things, and all events, not excepting even the volitions of creatures, are necessarily dependent on the divine will, there is nothing in the universe exempt from the law of necessity.

Now the force of this objection lies in the influence which association gives to the ambiguous and exceptionable word necessity. In the place of Edwards's moral necessity, let his definition, "infallible certainty," be substituted. Is it objected, that the wisdom and goodness of God are so immutable and boundless, as to render it absolutely certain, that the decisions of His will must forever be right? Would it be better that it should be *doubtful*, whether He will invariably adhere to perfect rectitude? Perhaps the objector has a special reference to the volitions of finite agents, bringing the charge against Edwards, that according to his views, particular acts of choice will certainly follow from the nature and state of the agent, and the circumstances in which he is placed; that every volition is owing to some cause or causes, forming part of a series of causes *originating* in the great First Cause. The objection must apply either to the *certainty* of volitions, or to their certain *dependence* on their causes. If acts of the will are uncertain, then all events which *depend* on these acts, and of

course, the most important changes in the moral world are uncertain. Is this a state of things so greatly to be desired, that every theory of the will which is inconsistent with it is wholly inadmissible?

But that volitions certainly follow from a train of causes proceeding from the *Ruler of the universe*, is denied by many. Yet we are reduced to the alternative of admitting either this supposition, or that volitions are determined by causes originating in *nothing*, or by no cause at all. Every series of finite causes, if traced back to its origin, must terminate either in the eternal First Cause, or in absolute nothing. Between these two, the comparison, in respect to the point before us, is to be made. Is it desirable that blank nonentity should leave human volitions uncertain, rather than that they should be rendered certain by infinite wisdom and goodness? Is there reason to fear that the causes of volition, if there are any, will not be so well directed by omniscience and unlimited benevolence, as by absolute contingency? Unlimited intelligence can trace the *consequences* of an action, down through distant ages; its influence upon this and other worlds, and upon the interests of the universe, through the successive periods of endless duration. But nonentity does not look into futurity. It regards no consequences. It sees not the relation of actions to distant results. Infinite wisdom has a *choice* of ends. It makes a selection of the means which are best adapted to the accomplishment of its purposes. But if mere nothing gives direction to events, it does it by blind and undiscerning contingency. Boundless benevolence seeks the highest good of the universe, and arranges the measures of providence and grace for

the attainment of this end. But absolute chance knows no distinction between good and evil ; between the wants of an insect, and the interests of an empire ; between the pleasures of an hour, and the enjoyment which continues and increases for ages of ages.

But it is urged, that all causes can not have originated with the Supreme Being, because there is *evil* in the world, and He is the author of nothing but good. It must be admitted, that all the trains of causes which proceed from him are productive of good ; and that they are introduced into the created system *for the sake* of the good which they produce. But when we consider the endless variety of these causes, and their innumerable relations and combinations with each other, how does it appear, that *all* their effects must be such as a benevolent mind would wish them to be ? While they are productive of immeasurable good, may they not be the occasion of *some evil* ? Was it not a sufficient reason for introducing them, that it was foreseen, that the good resulting from them would greatly overbalance the evil ? Do you ask why the omniscient Creator did not select, from among all *possible* causes, those which would lead to good *only* ? Can you shew that there *are or can be* any causes, or combinations of causes, which are productive of the highest good, while they are the occasion of no evil ? So far as we can form an opinion, from the actual state of the world, those gifts of the Creator which are the means of our enjoyment, furnish the principal temptations to iniquity. Do you say that infinite wisdom and goodness can not be the cause of any thing which is the cause of evil ? Then you must either deny that he is the Creator of men, or

that men are the causes of their own sinful acts. If there can be nothing in the effect which is not found in the cause, neither sin nor suffering can proceed from any thing which has derived its existence from a being of boundless goodness and felicity.

In the succeeding section, President Edwards undertakes to shew, that "the acts of the will of the human soul of *Jesus Christ* are necessarily holy, yet truly virtuous, praiseworthy, rewardable," &c. By the *first* part of this proposition, he explains himself to mean, that "it was *impossible*, that the acts of the will of the human soul of Christ should, in any instance, degree, or circumstance, be otherwise than holy, and agreeable to God's nature and will." This he endeavors to prove, from the multiplied promises and predictions of the scriptures, which he has presented to our view, in a most ample collection of passages from the Old and New Testaments. The examination of this point, he concludes in these words; "I have been the longer in the proof of this matter, it being a thing denied by some of the greatest Arminians, by Episcopius in particular; and because I look upon it as a point clearly and absolutely determining the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, concerning the necessity of such a freedom of will, as is insisted on by the latter, in order to moral agency."

He then proceeds, in the second place, "to consider whether Christ, in his holy behavior on earth, was not thus a moral agent, subject to commands, promises, &c. —Dr. Whitby," he observes, "very often speaks of what he calls a freedom *ad utrumlibet*, without necessity, as requisite to law and commands. But yet we read of

Christ's being the subject of the commands of his Father. If there be any truth in Christianity, or the Holy Scriptures, the man Christ Jesus had his will infallibly, unalterably, and unfrustrably determined to good, and that alone ; but yet he had promises of glorious rewards made to him, on consideration of his persevering in, and perfecting, the work which God had appointed him.— Christ had not only promises of glorious success and rewards made to his obedience and sufferings, but the scriptures plainly represent him as using these promises for *motives and inducements* to obey and suffer. And how strange would it be, to hear any Christian assert, that the holy and excellent temper and behavior of Jesus Christ, and that obedience which he performed, under such great trials, was not *virtuous or praiseworthy*, because his will was not free *ad utrumque*, to either holiness or sin, but was unalterably determined to one ; that virtue, when applied to these things, is *but an empty name*.—According to this doctrine, that creature who is evidently set forth in scripture, as the first born of every creature, as having, in all things, the pre-eminence, and as the highest of all creatures, in virtue, honor, and worthiness of esteem, praise, and glory, on the account of his virtue, is less worthy of reward or praise, than the very least of saints ; yea, no more worthy than a clock, or mere machine, that is truly passive, and moved by natural necessity."

Edwards next undertakes to shew, in his third section, that "the case of such as are *given up of God to sin*, and of fallen man in general, proves moral necessity and inability to be consistent with blame-worthiness.—That there is such a thing," he observes, "as

men's being judicially given up to sin is certain, if the scripture rightly informs us; such a thing being often there spoken of.—It is needless to stand particularly to inquire, what God's giving men up to their own hearts' lusts signifies: It is sufficient to observe, that hereby is certainly meant God's so ordering or disposing things, in some respect or other, either by doing or forbearing to do, as that the consequence should be men's continuing in their sins.—If not only co-action, but all necessity, will prove men blameless, then Judas was blameless, after Christ had given him over, and had already declared his certain damnation, and that he should *verily* betray him. He was guilty of no sin in betraying his master, on this supposition; though his so doing is spoken of by Christ, as the most aggravated sin, more heinous than the sin of Pilate in crucifying him."

In reply to Dr. Whitby's denial, "that men, in this world, are ever so given up by God to sin, that their wills should necessarily be determined to evil; though he owns, that hereby it may become *exceeding difficult* for men to do good, having a strong bent, and powerful inclination, to what is evil," Edwards observes; "If we should allow the case to be just as he represents, the judgment of giving up to sin will no better agree with his notions of that liberty which is essential to praise or blame, than if we should suppose it to render the avoiding of sin *impossible*. For if an impossibility of avoiding sin wholly excuses a man; then, for the same reason, its *being difficult* to avoid it excuses him *in part*; and this, just in proportion to the degree of difficulty. If the influence of *moral* impossibility or inability be the same, to excuse persons in not doing or not avoiding any

thing, as that of *natural* inability, (which is supposed,) then undoubtedly, in like manner, *moral difficulty* has the same influence to excuse with *natural difficulty*. But all allow, that natural impossibility wholly excuses, and also, that *natural difficulty* excuses in part."

SECTION XIII.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MORAL INABILITY.

Comparison of Edwards's scheme of moral agency with that of his opponents—Is it essential to accountability, that every volition should be determined by a preceding volition?—A man's volitions are from himself—Does the moral character of all our volitions depend upon a *commanding purpose*; or upon any thing preceding?—Is the Arminian notion of the freedom of the will consistent with moral agency?—Is it necessary to accountability, that our volitions should be fortuitous?—In what sense, is obligation commensurate with ability?—Is moral inability inconsistent with accountable agency?—Can a man be compelled to will *against his will*?—If a man is *induced* to will in a particular way, does this release him from obligation?—Is absolute contingency the only ground of merit and demerit?—In what sense, is *power to the contrary* essential to accountability?—Does this power belong to *imperative* acts, to *purposes*, to *emotions*, to constitutional *susceptibility*, or to *all* of them?—In what sense, is it necessary that a moral agent should *have a control* over his volitions?—In what sense, must he *originate* them?—Why is a man unable to *change* his present inclination?—Is it right that a man should be *commanded* to do that which he is morally unable to do?—Immanent and imperative acts of will—All inability which excuses may be resolved into one thing—Constitutional susceptibilities—Is a want of the susceptibilities upon which a right choice depends *natural* or *moral* inability?

IN the three sections which we have now been examining, Edwards endeavors to prove, by a reference to *facts*, that moral agency is not inconsistent with *all* that is called necessity. He adduces instances of beings who are under what he terms moral necessity, and who, notwithstanding, are either virtuous or vicious. In several succeeding sections, he arrives at the same conclusion,

by a consideration of the *nature* of accountable agency. In the fourth section, he undertakes to shew, that "command and obligation to obedience are consistent with moral inability to obey."

To enable us to judge correctly of the soundness of Edwards's reasoning, on the subject of obligation, it is important to keep in view the relation between his own scheme and that of his opponents. The question between him and them is not, Whether the acts for which a man is accountable, are acts of his *own will*, volitions which he himself puts forth. In this, the parties are agreed. But according to Edwards, the man is *induced* to will as he does, by some motive. He seeks to obtain one object rather than another, because he is *better pleased* with the one than with the other. And he is better pleased with some things than with others, because the nature and state of his mind are such, that some things are better fitted than others to give him pleasure. The certain dependence of our choice upon motives, is what Edwards calls moral necessity. The opposite doctrine implies, that there is no such certain dependence; that choice is not determined by any thing preceding; or if any dependence at all be admitted, that it can not be traced back beyond the agent himself. If there is no dependence of volition on any thing preceding, then the man wills with absolute contingency or accident. He merely *happens* to choose as he does. There is no ground or reason why he wills one way rather than another. "So that it is the Arminian scheme," says Edwards, "and not the scheme of the Calvinists, that is utterly inconsistent with moral government, and with all use of laws, precepts, prohibitions,

promises, or threatenings.—If volitions are events that come to pass by pure accident, without any determining cause, this is most palpably inconsistent with all use of laws and precepts; for nothing is more plain, than that laws can be of no use to direct and regulate perfect accident.—The end of laws is to bind *to one side*; and the end of commands is to turn the will one way: and therefore, they are of no use, unless they turn or bias the will that way.”

It may be said, that a man is accountable for his acts of choice, because *he determines them himself*. This must mean either

That it is he himself that chooses, or

That his choice is dependent on nothing preceding; or

That it is determined by a previous act or state of his own mind.

The second supposition is that of volition by pure accident. The first is precisely the doctrine of Edwards, that the man is accountable because he wills. According to the third supposition, every volition for which a man is accountable, must be determined, either by a preceding volition, or purpose, or affections, or views of the understanding, or some state of the mind of which we are not conscious, or the nature and substance of the mind. If *every* volition which is of a moral nature, must be determined by a preceding volition, then the *first* in a series of acts of choice, has no moral character. But all the others are dependent on this one. How then, according to the views of Edwards's opponents, can the man be accountable for these acts, which are determined by that which is not of a moral nature?

Edwards represents an objector as inquiring; "Who can ever be truly satisfied, that men are fitly blamed or commended, punished or rewarded, for those volitions which are not *from themselves*, and of whose existence they are not the causes? Men may refine, as much as they please;—yet there can be no satisfaction in such doctrine as this. The *natural sense* of the mind of man will always resist it." To this he replies; "I humbly conceive, that such an objector, if he has capacity, and humility, and calmness of spirit, sufficient impartially and thoroughly to examine himself, will find that he knows not really what he would be at. He would have a man's volition be *from himself*. Let it be *from himself*, most primarily and originally of any way conceivable; that is, from his own choice. How will that help the matter, as to his being justly blamed or praised, unless that choice itself be blame or praiseworthy? And how is the choice itself (an ill choice, for instance) blameworthy, according to these principles, unless that be from himself too, in the same manner; that is, from his own choice? But the original and first-determining choice in the affair, is not from his choice: His choice is not the cause of it. And if it be from himself *some other way*, and not from his choice, surely that will not help the matter."*

It has been said, that particular volitions, whether they be imperative acts, or affections, may be virtuous or sinful, because they proceed from a *commanding purpose*. The robber has formed a resolution to plunder, whenever he has a favorable opportunity. The miser has come to a determination to direct all his efforts to

* Part IV, Sec. 13.

the accumulation of property. The foreign missionary has consecrated his powers and attainments to the conversion of the heathen. The actions of these men, from day to day, are regulated by the governing purpose of their lives. This controlling resolution, it is said, gives the moral character to the particular acts which it determines. But what renders the man accountable for the predominant purpose itself? What has determined *that* to be as it is? Has it proceeded from his *affections and passions*? We are not allowed to stop at these, if they are of a moral nature, and if *every thing* for which a man is accountable must be dependent on something preceding. Are these feelings necessarily connected with views of the *understanding*? Or do they proceed from some *state* of mind of which we are not conscious; or from the very *substance and nature* of the mind. But these views, and state, and nature, of the mind have not all been produced by the agent himself. As each step in the series is, by supposition, determined by something preceding, the whole is made dependent on something besides the agent himself; who is, therefore, according to the views of the objector, not accountable for any of these acts. "If there be any sort of act or exertion of the soul," says Edwards, "*prior* to all free acts of the will or acts of choice in the case, directing and determining what the will shall be; that act or exertion of the soul can not properly be subject to any command or precept, in any respect whatever, either directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely. Such acts can not be subject to commands *directly*, because they are no acts of the will; being by the supposition *prior* to all acts of the will, determining and giving rise

to all its acts: They not being acts of the will, there can be in them no consent to, or compliance with any command. Neither can they be subject to command or precept *indirectly* or remotely; for they are not so much as the *effects* or *consequences* of the will, being prior to all its acts."

"And thus the Arminian notion of the freedom of the will, consisting in the soul's determining its own acts of will, instead of being essential to moral agency, and to men's being the subjects of moral government, is utterly inconsistent with it. For if the soul determines *all* its acts of will, it is therein subject to no command or moral government, as has been now observed; because its original, determining act is no act of will or choice, it being prior, by the supposition, to *every act* of will. And the soul can not be the subject of command in the act of the will itself, which depends on the foregoing determining act, and is determined by it; in as much as this is necessary, being the necessary consequence and effect of that prior determining act, which is not voluntary. Nor can the man be the subject of command or government in his *external* actions; because these are all necessary, being the necessary effects of the acts of the will themselves. So that mankind, according to this scheme, are subjects of command or moral government, in nothing at all; and all their moral agency is entirely excluded, and no room left for virtue or vice in the world."

If, for the sake of avoiding these conclusions, we resort to the supposition, that volitions are dependent on nothing preceding, then it is a matter of mere accident, that a man wills as he does. His acts of choice *happen*

to be one way rather than another. Is this an essential condition of accountability? Is a man no moral agent, has he no freedom of will, unless he is free from all directing influence of motives?

Between the two suppositions, that acts of choice are dependent on something preceding, and that they are fortuitous, there is no other alternative; unless it be, that they are *partly* dependent and partly fortuitous. The opponents of Edwards will, perhaps, admit of dependence *for a few steps*, provided that it is carried back so far only, that it breaks off *within* the mind of the agent. Dependence upon any thing *without*, is thought to be inconsistent with accountable agency. Let us suppose, then, that imperative acts are determined by the predominant purpose, and that this is determined by preceding affections; but that the affections themselves spring up fortuitously. Then the whole together are primarily dependent upon nothing. The affections happen to be as they are, and this determines what the purposes and imperative volitions will be.

If it be said, that although motives are necessary *antecedents* of volition, conditions *without which* choice could not take place, yet that they have no *directing* influence over the will: then, upon this supposition, it is chance, that is, nothing, that determines which way volitions shall incline. They *happen* sometimes to coincide with motives, and sometimes to go in the opposite direction. They are under the irresponsible dominion of nonentity.

It is claimed, that a man is under no obligation to do that which he has no *ability* to do; in other words, that "obligation is commensurate with ability." There can

be no question respecting this, if the term ability is understood to be here confined to its *proper* signification, to what President Edwards denominates *natural* inability. "No inability whatsoever," he observes, "which is merely moral, is *properly* called by the name of inability." But many hold that there is no accountability, where there is *any* inability, either natural or moral. Let us consider what is implied in this position. "Moral inability," according to Edwards, "consists either in the *want of inclination*, or the strength of a contrary inclination; or the want of *sufficient motives* in view, to induce and excite the act of the will, or the strength of apparent motives to the contrary." Now is it true, that a man is never under obligation to do any thing which he has no *inclination* to do, or which he is inclined not to do? Is he always excused for disobeying a command, if there are not motives in view, sufficient to induce and excite *him* to obedience? It is said by some, that if motives determine a man to will, then he is *compelled* to will, and all compulsion releases from obligation. What then is compulsion? It is commonly understood to be something *opposed* to the will. But was a man ever compelled, by motives, or by any thing else, to *will* against his will? When motives *invite*, *induce*, and *persuade* him to will, is this compulsion? When he yields to their influence, does he yield against his will? When he invariably chooses *as he pleases*, is he compelled to choose, or compelled to be pleased? When you offer a thirsty man a draught of water, and he gratefully accepts it, is this compulsion? When the prodigal is allured to his favorite haunts of dissipation, is he compelled to go there? With some philosophers, all deter-

mining influence of motives is compulsion. Let us see then what they would require. According to Edwards, a motive is something "which moves, excites, or invites, the mind to volition." Is it inconsistent with accountability, that the mind should be moved or excited to a particular choice, by any thing whatever? In other words, is perfect *indifference*, or an entire equilibrium of feeling, essential to moral agency? Is any *preponderating* influence, any thing which actually gives direction to choice, to be considered as fatal necessity? The man, it is said, must have the power of *choosing for himself*, even in opposition to motives. But will he ever do this, without any *inducement* for his choice? If his decision is owing to any inducement whatever, either of reason or passion, of principle or taste, of duty or interest, this is the very thing which Edwards calls motive. Motives owe their efficacy either to the state and temper of the mind, or to something presented to view from without, or to both together. Does accountable agency require, that there should be nothing in the nature, or state, or temper, of a man's mind, which will incline him to will one way rather than another? Are the patriot and the traitor deserving of neither praise nor reproach, if their hearts have inclined them to opposite courses of conduct. Are a man's actions neither morally right nor wrong, if he is subject to any directing influence from without; from the calls of ambition, or interest, or pleasure; from considerations of duty, and religion, and the righteous retributions of heaven? Is it essential to the existence of virtue and vice, that all objects which are brought before the mind should have equal power over the will, or none at all? Is it neces-

sary, that every thing which has *any* influence should have the *same* influence upon all men? Is it inconsistent with accountability, that there are qualities in things without, variously adapted to the tastes and tempers of different individuals; inducing some to embrace, and others to reject, the same objects? Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose that it were, as the objector would seem to have it, a matter of pure accident, whether a man were pleased or displeased with any thing; and whether his pleasure or aversion would have any influence on his conduct. Would this alone render him accountable? He must be induced to will as he does, by something or nothing. If by nothing, then he wills by accident. And is absolute contingency the only ground of merit and demerit? Is it that without which a man can have no moral character; can not be a proper object of divine command?

It is laid down as a principle by many that a man is not accountable for any thing which he may will or do, unless he *has power to the contrary*; unless he is equally free to make an opposite choice. There is a sense in which this is undoubtedly true. A man is not responsible for remaining in his place, if he has no power to move. He is not culpable for omitting to walk, if he has no strength to walk. He is not under obligation to do any thing for which he has not what Edwards calls *natural* power. But must he have *moral* power also; not only strength of body, but *inclination*; not only capacity of understanding, but *motives* sufficient to secure his obedience? Natural power is not concerned in *giving direction*, either to the will, or to bodily actions. Is a man never the subject of moral obligation, except

so far as the *motives* from which he acts are on the side of rectitude? If it should be admitted, that whatever he does can not be wrong, unless he has *some* motives to do right; will it follow, that to render him accountable, he must have *equal* motives to do right and to do wrong; equal moral power to the contrary? When the assassin plunges deep the fatal dagger, does he incur no guilt, unless he is equally inclined to spare his victim? When Paul devoted his life to the service of Christ, was there no holiness in this, unless he had an equal inclination to continue his persecutions?

Does that moral power of contrary choice which is thought by many to be essential to accountability, belong to *imperative* acts, to *purposes*, to *emotions*, to constitutional *susceptibilities*, or to *all* of them? Particular imperative acts are frequently the execution of a purpose previously formed. An incendiary has come to a determination to set fire to a city. When he applies the torch, is there no guilt in this, unless he has, at the time, a purpose equally strong to refrain from the act? Was there no criminality in his *resolving* to produce a conflagration, unless he was equally inclined to make a contrary resolution? Was there nothing vile in the passions which excited him to the work of destruction, if he had not, with the same external motives before him, an equal susceptibility of opposite emotions? Does the power of contrary choice consist in a faculty of willing *against* influence; or in being always under *equal* influences, of opposite tendencies; so that there can be no inducement of any kind to decide in favor of one rather than the other?

But it is said, that a man can not be accountable for his acts of will, unless he has a *control* over them ; and how, it is asked, can he control them if, in his agency, he is dependent on any thing without himself? If by a man's controlling his volitions, is meant putting them forth, making a free choice, this, it is agreed on all hands, is done by the man himself. He is the author of his own volitions. It is he that wills. No one else chooses for him. But this, it is thought, is not sufficient to render him accountable for his acts. Some farther control is deemed necessary. In what then, must this consist? The way in which we control events, is by the *will*. If the agency of the will in making a choice is not sufficient, what other agency of ours is there, that gives us the control of our volitions? Is it a *preceding* volition? How can we be accountable for *this*, unless we have the control of it by another, and of that by another still, &c., thus running accountability back, through an interminable series of volitions? If it be said, that a man's acts of will are controlled by the *state* of his mind, as affected by the various objects presented to his view ; this is the very control for which Edwards contends. This state of the mind is neither self-created, nor the product of chance. The principal point aimed at by the objector probably is to maintain, that no *other* control of volitions, except that which is exercised by the agent himself, is consistent with accountability. But on this supposition, virtue and vice, merit and guilt, are primarily dependent on *nothing* ; they belong to the boundless domain of chance ; a man is sinful or holy, because he *happens* to will as he does.

The objection which we have just been considering is frequently expressed in different terms, by saying that we can not be accountable for our acts of choice, unless they *originate* with us. If this means nothing more than that we are the proper *authors* of our own volitions, the proposition is undoubtedly true. But if it implies, that the antecedents on which volitions depend, can not be traced back beyond the agent himself, this brings us again into the region of absolute contingency.

In this connection, President Edwards shews in what sense a man is unable to *change* his present inclination. It is not for want of a *capacity* of willing; for want of that which Edwards calls a *natural* ability. This has no concern in giving *direction* to the will, or in *changing* the direction. But it is from *unwillingness* to make the change. It is *moral* inability. "The inclination," says Edwards, "is unable to change itself; and that for this plain reason, that it is unable to *incline* to change itself. Present choice can not, at present, choose to be otherwise; for that would be, at present, to choose something diverse from what is, at present, chosen."

He admits that the present state of the will may be in opposition to a similar inclination, at some *future time*. "The will may oppose some *future*, remote act that it is exposed to, but not its own present act.—Though it is impossible there should be any true, sincere desires and endeavors against a present volition or choice; yet there may be, against volitions of that kind, when viewed at a distance. A person may desire, and use means, to prevent future exercises of a certain inclination; and in order to it, may wish the habit might be removed; but his desires and endeavors may be ineffectual."

The distinction between the proper and the improper meaning of inability ; that is, in the language of Edwards, between natural and moral inability, shews that a man may be reasonably *commanded* to do that which he is, in the latter sense, unable to perform. If this were not the case, it would be unjust to require a man to do any thing which he is not both able and *willing* to do ; any thing, in short, which he does not *actually* do. "Such a state or act of the will," says Edwards, "may be required by command, as does not already exist. For if that volition only may be commanded to be, which already is, there could be no use of precept ; commands, in all cases, would be perfectly vain and impertinent. And not only may such a will be required, as is wanting before the command is given, but also such as may be possibly wanting afterwards ; such as the exhibition of the command may not be effectual to produce or excite. Otherwise, no such thing as disobedience to a proper and rightful command is possible in any case ; and there is no case supposable or possible, wherein there can be an inexcusable or faulty disobedience.—If merely that inability will excuse disobedience, which is implied in the opposition or defect of inclination, remaining after the command is exhibited, then wickedness always carries that in it which excuses it. It is evermore so, that by how much the more wickedness there is in a man's heart, by so much is his inclination to evil the stronger ; and by so much the more, therefore, has he of moral inability to the good required. His moral inability, consisting in the strength of his evil inclination, is the very thing wherein his wickedness consists." But if the want of a "willing

mind" is no excuse for the neglect of our duty, a man may be reasonably commanded to do that which it is certain he *never will do*, without a special divine interposition. The call to *immediate* repentance is reasonable, though the sinner has a confirmed aversion to a *present* change of heart. It is not sufficient that he is willing, or thinks he is willing, to be changed at some *future time*. His delay to make himself a new heart, is not excusable on the ground that he is not able, in *every* sense of the word, proper and improper; that he has not both capacity and *willingness* to repent.

"It must be borne in mind," says Edwards, "that no inability whatsoever which is merely *moral* is *properly* called by the name of inability; and that, in the strictest propriety of speech, a man may be said to have a thing in his power, if he has it at his election; and he can not be said to be unable to do a thing, when he can do it now if he pleases, or whenever he has a proper, direct, and immediate desire for it. As to those desires and endeavors that may be against the exercises of a strong habit, with regard to which, men may be said to be unable to avoid those exercises, they are remote desires and endeavors, in two respects. *First*, as to time; they are never against present volitions, but only against volitions of such a kind when viewed at a distance. *Secondly*, as to their *nature*; these opposite desires are not directly and properly against the habit and inclination itself; or the volitions in which it is exercised; for these, in themselves considered, are agreeable; but against something else, that attends them, or is their consequence; the opposition of the mind is leveled entirely against this; the inclination or volitions them-

selves are not all opposed directly, and for their own sake ; but only indirectly, and remotely, on the account of something alien and foreign.—Therefore, on the whole it is manifest, that *moral* inability alone (which consists in disinclination) never renders any thing improperly the subject matter of precept or command, and never can excuse any person in disobedience, or want of conformity to a command. *Natural* inability, arising from the want of natural capacity, or external hindrance, (which alone is *properly* called inability,) without doubt wholly excuses, or makes a thing improperly a matter of command.”

President Edwards, in explaining what he calls natural inability, avails himself of the distinction between *immanent* and *imperative* acts of will. “As to spiritual duties or acts,” he observes, “or any good thing in the state or immanent acts of the will itself, or of the affections (which are only certain modes of the exercise of the will) if persons are justly excused, it must be through want of capacity in the natural faculty of understanding.—As to such motions of body, or exercises or alterations of mind, which do not consist in the immanent acts or state of the will itself, but are supposed to be required as effects of the will ; I say, in such supposed effects of the will, in cases wherein there is no want of a capacity of understanding ; that inability, and that only excuses, which consists in want of connection between them and the will. For the will itself, as has been observed, is all that can be directly and immediately required by command ; and other things only indirectly, as connected with the will. Both these kinds of natural inability that have been mentioned, and so all inability that ex-

cuses, may be resolved into one thing ; namely, want of natural capacity or strength ; either capacity of understanding, or external strength." He closes the section under consideration by observing ; "If things for which men have a moral inability, may properly be the matter of precept or command, then they may also of *invitation* and counsel. Commands and invitations come very much to the same thing ; the difference is only circumstantial. Commands are as much a manifestation of the will of him that speaks as invitations, and as much testimonies of expectation of compliance."

It is sometimes said, that a man is not accountable for his acts of will, unless he has those *constitutional susceptibilities* on which right action depends. If this be admitted, will it follow, that their influence must always be *equal* or *superior* to that of the susceptibilities on which *wrong* action depends? If not, the latter, by overbalancing the former, may determine the will to the commission of iniquity. Or if the susceptibilities with opposite tendencies are themselves equal, while *objects* are so presented to the mind, as to excite the one class rather than the other, this may give direction to the choice ; a choice depending, according to the supposition, more upon circumstances, than upon any inequality in the different susceptibilities. Will it be affirmed, that a man is not responsible for his acts, unless his susceptibilities and the circumstances in which he is placed, are *both* such, that he has as great *inducement* to choose right, as to choose wrong? that the murderer incurs no guilt, unless he is as strongly inclined to spare his victim, as to take his life?

It may be said, perhaps, that a want of the constitutional susceptibilities upon which a right choice depends, is *natural* inability, and that this is inconsistent with obligation to obedience. But the want of that which tends to give a *right direction* to volition, however truly it may be owing to *nature*, is not what *Edwards* means by natural inability. According to him, natural inability, "*all inability that excuses,*" consists in a want either of "capacity of understanding, or external strength." The want of that which tends to *incline* the will to a right choice, is what he denominates *moral* inability. Natural inability of will is an incapacity of choosing either right or wrong. It relates to both alike. But *moral* inability prevents a man from choosing right, while he has the inclination as well as capacity to make a wrong choice. Whether we admit or deny the propriety of this application of the terms natural and moral, it concerns us to know whether we are not accountable for our volitions, unless, in addition to the faculty of willing, we have susceptibilities not only inclining us towards that which is right, but inclining us *as strongly at least*, as other susceptibilities incline us towards that which is wrong. Are we free from guilt, in all cases in which the inducements to obey God have less influence upon us, than the motives to disobey him? In other words are we under no obligations to choose right, except when we actually choose right? Does accountability imply, that we have not only a *capacity* to do right, but the inclination also, or the susceptibilities, or balance of susceptibilities on which this inclination depends?

"To moral agency," says *Edwards*, "belongs a *moral faculty*, or sense of moral good and evil;—and a *capa-*

city which an agent has of being influenced, in his actions, by moral *inducements* or motives." But does this imply, that every agent who has the *capacity* of being influenced by inducements to right action, has these inducements also ; and that he not only has them in some degree, but in sufficient strength to countervail the inducements which he has to wrong action ? Does the capacity of a balance to be turned by weights necessarily imply that the weights are actually upon it ?

SECTION XIV.

SINCERITY, INDIFFERENCE, HABITS, MOTIVES, &C.

Sincerity of desires and endeavors—Is equilibrium of will essential to liberty?—Are virtuous or vicious *habits or inclinations* inconsistent with moral agency?—Is the influence of *motives and inducements* inconsistent with liberty?—Circumstances and the state of the mind together determine volition—Different *degrees* of influence in motives—Arguments of Edwards's opponents turned against themselves—Their principles, in effect, shut all virtue out of the world.

In the fifth section of the third part, our author considers "that *sincerity of desires and endeavors* which is supposed to *excuse* in the non-performance of things in themselves good. It is what is much insisted on by many, that some men, though they are not able to perform spiritual duties, such as repentance of sin, love to God, a cordial acceptance of Christ as exhibited and offered in the gospel, &c., yet may sincerely desire and endeavor these things, and therefore must be excused." To this he replies, that "what is here supposed is a great mistake, and gross absurdity; even that men may sincerely choose and desire those spiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, &c., consisting in the exercise of the will itself, or in the disposition and inclination of the heart; and yet not be able to perform or exert them, This is absurd, because it is absurd to suppose, that a man should directly, properly, and sincerely, incline to have an inclination, which, at the same time,

is contrary to his inclination.—That which is called a desire and willingness for those inward duties, in such as do not perform them, has respect to these duties only indirectly and remotely, and is improperly represented as a willingness for them.—This indirect willingness, is not that exercise of the will which the command requires; but is entirely a different one, being a volition of a different nature, and terminated altogether on different objects. This other volition, which has only some indirect concern with the duty required, can not excuse for the want of that good will itself which is commanded; being not the thing which answers and fulfils the command, and being wholly destitute of the virtue which the command seeks.” *Sincere* desires, that is, *real* desires, are not always virtuous, because the *objects* desired may not be such as to imply, that the desires themselves are virtuous. “That which is real and hearty,” says Edwards, “is often called sincere, whether it be in virtue or vice. Some persons are sincerely *bad*, others are sincerely *good*; and others may be sincere and hearty in things which are in their own nature *indifferent*; as a man may be sincerely desirous of eating when he is hungry. But a being sincere, hearty, and in good earnest, is no virtue, unless it be in a thing that is virtuous. A man may be sincere and hearty, in joining a crew of pirates, or a gang of robbers.”

Similar observations may be made with respect to *endeavors* which proceed from sincere desires. “As a man’s being sincere, in such an indirect desire or willingness to do his duty, as has been mentioned, can not excuse for the want of performance; so it is with *endeavors* arising from such a willingness. The endeavor

ors can have no more goodness in them, than the will of which they are the effect and expression.—Such endeavors may have a *negatively* good influence. Those things which have no positive virtue, have no positive moral influence; yet they may be an occasion of persons' avoiding some positive evils."

"There is a great and unknown deceit, arising from the ambiguity of the phrase *sincere endeavors*. The word *sincere* is most commonly used to signify something that is good. Men are habituated to understand by it the same as *honest* and *upright*; which terms excite an idea of something good in the strictest and highest sense; good in the sight of Him who sees not only the outward appearance, but the heart. And therefore men think, that if a person be *sincere*, he will certainly be accepted. Whereas it ought to be observed, that the word *sincere* has two different significations. 1. Sincerity, as the word is sometimes used, signifies no more than *reality* of will and endeavor, with respect to any thing that is professed or pretended; without any consideration of the nature of the principle or aim whence this real will and true endeavor arises. 2. By sincerity is meant, not merely a *reality* of will and endeavor, of some sort or other, but a virtuous sincerity. In the former sense, a man is said to be sincere, in opposition to a mere pretense, and shew of the particular thing to be done or exhibited, without any real desire or endeavor at all. In the latter sense, a man is said to be sincere, in opposition to that shew of virtue there is in merely doing the matter of duty, without the reality of the virtue itself in the soul. In the latter kind of sincerity only, is there any thing truly valuable or acceptable in the sight of God."

In the sixth section, President Edwards enters into an examination of the position of his opponents, that *indifference* or *equilibrium* of will is essential to liberty and accountability. "If indifference belongs to liberty of will, as Arminians suppose, and it be essential to a virtuous action, that it be performed in a state of liberty, as they also suppose; it will follow, that it is essential to a virtuous action, that it be performed in a state of indifference: And if it be performed in a *state* of indifference, then doubtless it must be performed in a *time* of indifference. And so it will follow, that in order to the virtuousness of an act, the heart must be indifferent in the time of the performance of that act; and the more indifferent and cold the heart is, with relation to the act which is performed, so much the better; because the act is performed with so much the greater liberty. But is this agreeable to the light of nature? Is it agreeable to the notions which mankind, in all ages, have of virtue, that it lies in that which is contrary to indifference, even in the *tendency* and *inclination* of the heart to virtuous action; and that the stronger the inclination, and so the further from indifference, the more virtuous the heart, and so much the more praiseworthy the act which proceeds from it? If there be any acts which are done in a state of equilibrium, or spring immediately from perfect indifference and coldness of heart, they can not arise from any good principle or disposition in the heart; and consequently, according to common sense, have no sincere goodness in them, having no virtue of heart in them."

If liberty of indifference be taken in connection with such a *self-determining power* as implies, that each free

act of will is determined by *previous* choice, we are reduced to this double absurdity: "If the action *be* determined by a preceding act of choice, it can not be virtuous, because the action is not done in a state of indifference, nor does immediately arise from such a state; and so is not done in a state of liberty. If the action *be not* determined by a preceding act of choice, then it can not be virtuous; because then the will is not self-determined in it. So that, neither one way nor the other, can any actions be virtuous or vicious, according to Arminian principles."

From the assumption, that *equilibrium* of will is essential to liberty and accountability, it follows that virtuous or vicious *habits* or *inclinations* are inconsistent with liberty and moral agency. "It is many ways apparent," says Edwards, "that the Arminian scheme of liberty is utterly inconsistent with the being of any such things as either virtuous or vicious habits or dispositions. If liberty of *indifference* be essential to moral agency, then there can be no virtue in any habitual inclination of the heart. And if *self-determining power* in the will be necessary to moral agency, praise, blame, &c., then nothing done by the will can be any further praise or blameworthy, than so far as the will is moved, swayed, and determined by itself. Therefore the will must not be put out of its balance already; and so the self-determining act anticipated. The same thing follows from their doctrine concerning the inconsistency of necessity with liberty, praise, dispraise, &c. None will deny, that bias and inclination *may be* so strong as to be invincible, and leave no possibility of the will's determining contrary to it; and so be attended with necessity.

Therefore, if necessity be inconsistent with liberty, then when fixed inclination is to such a degree of strength, it utterly excludes all virtue, vice, praise, or blame."

To the objection, "that however the forementioned reasons will prove, that no habits which are *natural*, or that are born or created with us, can be either virtuous or vicious; yet they will not prove this of habits which have been *acquired*, and established by repeated free acts;" he replies, that "this evasion will not at all help the matter. For if freedom of will be essential to the very *nature* of virtue and vice, then there is no virtue or vice but only in that very thing wherein this liberty is exercised.—On the whole, it appears, that if the notions of Arminians concerning liberty and moral agency be true, it will follow, that there is no virtue in any such habits or qualities as humility, meekness, patience, mercy, gratitude, generosity, heavenly-mindedness.—And in all cases, the stronger the inclinations of any are to virtue, and the more they love it, the less virtuous they are; and the more they love wickedness, the less vicious. Whether these things are agreeable to scripture, let every Christian; and every man who has read the Bible, judge: and whether they are agreeable to common sense, let every one judge, that hath human understanding in exercise. And if we pursue these principles, we shall find, that virtue and vice are wholly excluded out of the world; and that there never was, nor ever can be, any such thing as one or the other; either in God, angels, or men."

From habits and inclinations of the mind, giving direction to particular acts of will, our author proceeds, in the following section, to shew that the nature of moral

agency, as explained by his opponents, is "inconsistent with all influence of *motive* and *inducement*, in either virtuous or vicious actions." He here brings into view *external circumstances*, in connection with the state of the mind, as having an influence in determining the will. They, as well as "virtuous and vicious habits and dispositions," may have a *tendency, previous* to particular acts of choice, to turn the will in one direction rather than another. It is evident indeed, that Edwards does not consider these habits and dispositions as having an influence *independent* of circumstances. "It is equally against those notions of liberty of will, whether there be, previous to the act of choice, a preponderancy of the inclination, or a preponderancy of those *circumstances* which have a tendency to move the inclination. And indeed it comes to just the *same thing*. To say, the circumstances of the mind are such, as tend to sway, and turn its inclination one way, is the same thing as to say, the inclination of the mind, as *under* such circumstances, tends that way." He does not speak of the habit or state of the mind as being such that the agent will act in one way only, *in all possible circumstances*; nor of the circumstances as being such that they will induce *every* mind to act in the same way. He does not say, that the saints in heaven, if they should return to the earth, and be subjected again to "manifold temptations," would of course continue to be entirely free from sin; nor that unrenowned sinners would become perfectly holy, by being admitted into heaven. But he supposes, that the state of the mind and the circumstances *together* determine what the particular volition will be; and that this is inconsis-

tent with such an *equilibrium of previous tendency*, as is thought by many to be essential to freedom and accountability.

He next meets the objection presented in a different form. "If any think it most proper to say, that motives do *alter the inclination*, and give a new bias to the mind; it will not alter the case, as to the present argument. For if motives operate by giving the mind an inclination, then they operate by destroying the mind's indifference, and laying it under a bias. But to do this, is to destroy the Arminian freedom." Edwards afterwards considers the effect upon liberty from *different degrees* of influence in motives. In the case of *invincible* motives, "Arminians will doubtless say, liberty is destroyed. And if so, then if motives are exhibited with half so much power, they hinder liberty, in proportion to their strength, and go half way towards destroying it.—If there be nothing in the nature of motive or moral suasion, that is at all opposed to liberty, then the *greatest degree* of it can not hurt liberty. But if there be any thing in the nature of the thing, that is against liberty, then the *least degree* of it hurts it in some degree.—Now let it be considered, whether these things are agreeable to common sense. If it should be allowed; that there are some instances wherein the soul chooses without any motive; what virtue can there be in such a choice? I am sure there is no prudence or wisdom in it. Such a choice is made for no good end; for it is for no end at all. If it were for any end, the view of the end would be the motive exciting to the act; and if the act be for no good end, and so from no good aim, then there is no good intention in it: And

therefore, according to all our natural notions of virtue, no more virtue in it than in the motion of the smoke, which is driven to and fro by the wind, without any aim or end in the thing moved."

"By these things," says Edwards, "it appears, that the argument against the Calvinists, taken from the use of counsels, exhortations, invitations, expostulations, &c. so much insisted upon by Arminians, is truly against themselves. For these things can operate no other way, to any good effect, than as in them is exhibited motive and inducement, tending to excite and determine the acts of the will. But it follows, on their principles, that the acts of will excited by such causes can not be virtuous; because, so far as they are from these, they are not from the will's self-determining power.—This notion of liberty and moral agency frustrates all endeavors to draw men to virtue by instruction, or persuasion, precept, or example: For though these things may induce men to what is *materially* virtuous, yet at the same time, they take away the form of virtue, because they destroy liberty."

"So it clearly follows from these principles, that God has no hand in any man's virtue, nor does at all promote it, either by a *physical* or *moral* influence;—that all means He has used with men, in ordinances or providences; yea, all influences of his Spirit, ordinary and extraordinary, have had no tendency at all to excite any one virtuous act of the mind, or to promote any thing morally good and commendable, in any respect. For there is no way that these or any other means can promote virtue, but one of these three: Either (1.) by a *physical* operation on the heart. But all effects that are

wrought in men in this way, have no virtue in them, by the concurring voice of all Arminians. . . Or (2.) morally, by exhibiting *motives* to the understanding, to excite good acts in the will. But it has been demonstrated, that volitions which are excited by motives are necessary, and not excited by a self-moving power; and therefore, by their principles, there is no virtue in them. Or (3.) by merely giving the will an *opportunity* to determine itself, concerning the objects proposed, either to choose or reject, by its own uncaused, unmoved, uninfluenced self-determination. And if this be all, then all those means do no more to promote virtue than vice: For they do nothing but give the will opportunity to determine itself *either way*."

"Thus that horrid blasphemous consequence will certainly follow from the Arminian doctrine, which they charge on others; namely, that God acts an inconsistent part, in using so many counsels, warnings, invitations, entreaties, &c., with sinners, to induce them to forsake sin, and turn to the ways of virtue; and that all are insincere and fallacious. It will follow from their doctrine, that God does these things, when He knows, at the same time, that they have no manner of tendency to promote the effect He seems to aim at; yea, knows that if they have any influence, this very influence will be inconsistent with such an effect, and prevent it."

"From what has been observed in this section, it appears again, that Arminian principles and notions, when fairly examined, and pursued in their demonstrable consequences, do evidently shut all virtue out of the world, and make it impossible that there should ever be any such thing, in any case; or that any such thing should

ever be conceived of. For by these principles, the very notion of virtue or vice implies absurdity and contradiction. For it is absurd in itself, and contrary to common sense, to suppose a virtuous act of mind, *without* any good intention or aim ; and by their principles, it is absurd to suppose a virtuous act *with* a good intention or aim ; for to act for an end, is to act *from a motive*.— That act which is performed without inclination, without motive, without end, must be performed without any concern of the will. To suppose an act of the will without these, implies a contradiction.”

SECTION XV.

RELATION OF VIRTUE AND VICE TO THEIR
CAUSE. NATURE OF AGENCY.

Virtue and vice lie in the *nature* of man's volitions; not in their cause—Does a man's being influenced by motives imply that he is a mere *passive* agent?—Does a man's accountability depend on his being *himself* the cause of his volitions?—Virtuous or vicious acts *may be* the cause of other moral acts—The moral quality of *external* actions depends on the volitions which cause them—We are the *authors* of our own acts of choice—Nature of *agency* and *action* according to Mr. Chubb—In what sense, can we be both active and passive at the same time?—Action and passion signify opposite *relations*, but not opposite existences—Can not the Almighty *create* agents who shall act from power within themselves?

In the fourth part of Edwards's work on the Will, he examines the arguments of his opponents, in support of their own opinions, on the subject under discussion. In the first section, he considers one of their prominent principles, that "the essence of the virtue and vice of dispositions of the heart, and acts of the will, lies not in their *nature*, but in their *cause*; so that, if the disposition of the mind, or act of the will, be ever so good, yet if the *cause* of the disposition or act be not our virtue, there is nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it; and on the contrary, if the will, in its inclination and acts, be ever so bad, yet unless it *arises* from something that is our vice or fault, there is nothing vicious or blameworthy in it." This, in his view, is a gross absurdity; and implies, in its logical results, that there is neither

virtue nor vice, merit or demerit, in the created universe. If the moral character of a particular act of will, is derived wholly from its cause, the character of that cause must depend upon another, and of that other, upon something still farther back in the series; so that, "we must drive faultiness back from step to step, from a lower cause to a higher, *in infinitum*; and that is thoroughly to banish it from the world, and to allow it no possibility of existence, any where in the universality of things.—To say that vice does not consist in the thing which is vicious, but in its cause, is the same as to say, that vice does not consist in vice, but in that which produces it."

To avoid this absurd conclusion, it may perhaps be said, that the *first* cause of a man's volitions is *within himself*; that *this* is an independent cause, something which is a cause *only*, without being an effect, and that to *such* a cause alone, can moral qualities be properly ascribed. It is urged that a man can not be accountable for any act of his which is the effect of something without himself, as in putting forth such an act, he would be a *passive agent*. Let us suppose then, that he wills to steal a watch, and that he merely *happens* to will thus; that no previous act or state of mind, or external motive, has had any concern in bringing him to this determination. Is he not as passive, in this fortuitous decision, as if motives had influenced him to steal? On either supposition, he must act, he must put forth a volition. Is he either less passive, or more guilty, for being the subject of accident in willing, than for complying with base motives? Suppose that his purpose to steal was owing to a covetous *disposition*. Is it essential to

his accountability, that this disposition should either have come into existence by chance, or been produced by previous fortuitous acts?

It may be said again, that a man is the cause of his volitions, *in putting them forth*; they are his own choice, he is their proper author, and it is this, and not any *preceding* cause, which renders him accountable for them. Now this is precisely the doctrine of Edwards, except that he may not speak of willing agents as being the *cause* of what they do themselves; the doing, the choosing, not being viewed by him as distinct from the causing. But let it be admitted, that the agent, is in strict propriety, the cause, and the *only* immediate cause of his own acts of will; that no preceding state of mind or external motive, has any influence in determining what his choice shall be. Is this cause of volition *itself uncaused*? Is it self-created? Or did it come into existence by chance? If not, then we have a cause of the immediate cause of volition; and according to the doctrine of the objector, the responsibility of the volitions must be thrown back, from the agent to this previous cause, whatever it may be.

If the agent was made of such a nature as to be the cause of his volitions, independently of all directing influence of motives, then he was either so made, that from his very nature, he would put forth *these particular volitions*; or he was merely so constituted, that he would put forth *some volitions or other*. On the former supposition, the principles of the objector would carry back the responsibility of these acts, from the agent to his Creator. On the latter supposition, man is not the cause of his volitions being one way rather than an-

other; of their being virtuous or vicious. He is only the cause that there *are* volitions of some kind or other. The particular nature of these acts is a matter of pure accident. On what ground, is he responsible for volitions which are entirely fortuitous? In the language of Edwards, "It is a *contingence* that happens to the man, arising from nothing in him; and is necessary, as to any inclination or choice of his; and therefore, can not make him either the better or worse, any more than a tree is better than other trees, because it oftener happens to be lit upon by a swan or nightingale; or a rock more vicious than other rocks, because rattlesnakes have happened oftener to crawl over it."

It is not an opinion of Edwards, however, that virtuous and vicious acts can *in no case*, be the cause of virtue or vice. "It is true," he observes, "a cause *may* be to blame for being the cause of vice: It may be wickedness in the cause, that it produces wickedness. But it would imply a contradiction to suppose, that these two are the same individual wickedness. The wicked act of the cause, in producing wickedness, is one wickedness; and the wickedness produced, if there be any produced, is another."

The *reason* why it is so frequently thought that the moral good or evil of internal inclinations and volitions lies not in their nature, but in their cause, Edwards supposes to be this, that in the case of *external* actions, such is truly the fact. There is nothing virtuous or vicious in motions of the body, except as they are ordered by acts of the will. Outward conduct is spoken of as being right or wrong, because it is an index of the state of the heart, to which all moral qualities belong.

As we are thus accustomed, from childhood, to refer the virtuous or vicious character of external actions to the volitions which cause them ; we readily transfer this habit of judging, to the relation between volitions themselves and their causes ; "not considering," as Edwards observes, "the vast difference in the nature of the case."

He is far from believing, however, that it is not essential to the moral character of internal acts, that the agent should be the cause of them, in the sense of *being their author*, putting them forth &c., though not by *preceding acts*. "As the phrase, *being the author*, may be understood not of being the producer by an *antecedent* act of will ; but as a person may be said to be the author of the act of will itself, by his being the immediate *agent*, or the being that *is acting*, or *in exercise* in that act ; if the phrase of *being the author*, is used to signify this, then doubtless common sense requires men's being the authors of their own acts of will, in order to their being esteemed worthy of praise or dispraise on account of them. And common sense teaches, that they must be the authors of *external actions*, in the *former* sense, namely, their being the causes of them by an act of will or choice, in order to their being justly blamed or praised. But it teaches no such thing with respect to the acts of the will themselves."

NATURE OF AGENCY.

In the second section of Part IV, Edwards examines the Philosophy of Mr. Chubb, respecting *action* and *agency*. The will it is claimed, is an *active* power, and therefore it can not be *passive*. Activity is inconsistent

with passiveness. That which is *acted upon* can not *act*. If a man is *caused* to will, he is not an agent. Unless he is self-moved, he can not act. It is easy to prove, or to seem to prove the most contradictory propositions, if we may be allowed to form arbitrary definitions at pleasure, and then *take it for granted*, that these definitions correspond with facts. In the case of the will, definitions of action and activity are given which vary essentially from the meaning of the terms when applied, in common use, to any other finite agency. The whirlwind is active, though it is caused to act. The cannon shot is active, though it has no self-determining power to originate its own motion. The passions are active, though they are kindled by exciting occasions and objects.

But these, it may be said, are examples of *physical* agency. Whereas the activity of the *will* is of a character entirely different. It must be self-originated. It can not be caused, without destroying its nature. Where, I would ask, is the *evidence* of these assertions? The proof which is offered is this, that the supposition of dependent volition is inconsistent with the very definitions of free agency, activity, &c. But how are these definitions obtained? Are they derived from the common use and meaning of language? Or are they arbitrarily constructed, for the express purpose of excluding dependence, in the case of volition, and in this way, taking for granted the main point in discussion? Let it first be *shewn to be a fact*, that neither the state and temper of the mind, nor arguments, nor persuasions; neither internal nor external motives, have any influence in giving direction to the will. It may then be

admitted, that Mr. Chubb's definitions are conformable to the reality of things.

But can the will be *active* and *passive* at the same time? This depends upon the meaning which we attach to the term *passive*. It is sometimes used to denote that which is *inactive*. In this sense, it is directly opposed to that which is *active*. A man can not be *active*, while he is wholly *inactive*. But the word *passive* is more commonly used to express *relation to a cause*. In this sense, the most *active* thing in the world may be *passive*. It may be *caused* to be *active*. Its *passiveness*, that is, its being under the influence of a cause, may be the very reason why it is so *active*. "That the meaning of the word *action*," says Edwards, "as Mr. Chubb and many others use it, is utterly unintelligible and inconsistent, is manifest, because it belongs to their notion of an action, that it is something wherein is no passion or *passiveness*; that is, (according to their sense of *passiveness*,) it is under the power, influence, or action, of no cause. And this implies, that action has no cause, and is no effect.—So that an act, according to their metaphysical notion of it, is something of which there is no idea; it is nothing but a confusion of the mind, excited by words without any distinct meaning, and is an absolute nonentity; and that, in two respects: (1.) There is nothing in the world, that ever was, is, or can be, to answer the things which must belong to its description, according to what they suppose to be essential to it. And (2.) there neither is, nor ever was, nor can be, any notion or idea to answer the word, as they use and explain it.—The word is never used in vulgar speech, in that sense which Arminian divines use it in,

namely, for the self-determinate exercise of the will, or an exertion of the soul that arises without any necessary connection with any thing foregoing. If a man does something voluntarily, or as the effect of his choice, then in the most proper sense, and as the word is most originally and commonly used, he is said to *act*.—If the word *action* is arbitrarily used by some men otherwise, to suit some scheme of metaphysics or morality, no argument can reasonably be founded on such a use of this term, to prove any thing but their own pleasure. For divines and philosophers strenuously to urge such arguments, as though they were sufficient to support and demonstrate a whole scheme of moral philosophy and divinity, is certainly to erect a mighty edifice on the sand, or rather on a shadow."

To the objection, that action and passion are words of *contrary signification*, and therefore can not both belong to the agent at the same time; the author replies: "That action and passion are doubtless, as they are sometimes used, words of opposite signification; but not as signifying opposite *existences*, but only opposite *relations*. The words *cause* and *effect* are terms of opposite signification; but nevertheless, if I assert that the same thing may, at the same time, in different respects and relations, be both cause and effect, this will not prove that I confound the terms. The soul may be both *active* and *passive*, in the same thing, in different respects; active with relation to one thing, and passive with relation to another.—It is no absurdity to suppose, that contrary relations may belong to the same thing, at the same time, with respect to different things."

It may be said, that an omniscient and omnipotent being is certainly able to *create* agents who shall act from power within themselves; who shall be *active*, without being *passive*.* If this means, that an agent may be created, *every* act of whose will shall depend upon his own choice, that is; upon a *previous* volition of his own, the assertion is denied; for it involves a manifest contradiction. If it means that the volitions of the agent depend upon something within himself *different* from acts of will, this something, whatever it may be, is primarily dependent on something *without* himself. He does not *so originate* his choice, that it has no dependence on any thing else. If the proposition is understood to signify, that God can create agents whose volitions shall spring forth *fortuitously*, without any dependence whatever upon any thing preceding; either the nature, state, or temper of the mind, or external motives; and if this should be conceded, still it remains to be proved, that He has *in fact* created such agents.

It may be urged, that as God is a complete agent in himself, whose acts of will depend on nothing preceding, He can form a finite agent, *in his own image*, who can will independently of all influence from without. But it is to be considered, that the will and purposes of God are *eternal* and *unchangeable*. Because that which is from eternity neither is, nor can be, dependent on any thing preceding, does it follow, that human volitions, which *begin* to be put forth, may be equally independent of every thing preceding? From the fact, that the original, self-existent cause of all things is active,

* See Dr. S. Clarke on the Being and Attributes of God.

without being passive, are we to infer, that this is the case with agents who are, from time to time, coming into being? It will probably not be claimed, that the volitions of even the Supreme Being are independent of his infinite wisdom and goodness. But these attributes, as well as his purposes, are eternal and unchangeable; whereas those states of mind which have an influence on *human* volitions are dependent upon something preceding.

SECTION XVI.

DECISION OF COMMON SENSE.

The phrase common sense, as it is sometimes used, is synonymous with intuition—More frequently, it means the practical judgment of common men on common subjects—The decisions of this kind of common sense are not infallible—It is not more to be relied on, upon *all* subjects, than the opinions of men of science—Difficulty of proposing philosophical questions, in such terms that they will be correctly understood by plain men, in the ordinary walks of life—Philosophical necessity is not always that which the common people mean by necessity—Reasons why one signification of the term is insensibly exchanged for the other—Is the certainty of volitions inconsistent with accountability?—The same external objects are not invariably followed by the same volitions—Moral necessity is not opposed to the will—If volitions were contingent, they might often be opposed to our strongest desires—It is agreeable to common sense to suppose moral necessity to be consistent with accountability—Is Edwards's moral necessity the same as natural necessity?—Has the distinction between them no practical importance?—Appeals to common sense are often presented in equivocal terms—Is an accountable agent an independent agent?—Is a man under no obligation to do any thing unless he has both natural and moral power to do it?—Common inclination frequently mistaken for common sense—Fabricating popular opinion.

In the third section, Edwards examines "the reasons why some think it contrary to *common sense*, to suppose those things which are *necessary* to be worthy of either praise or blame." When an appeal is made to the tribunal of common sense, there ought to be a distinct understanding of what is intended by the expression common sense; and what is the import of the propositions presented for its decision. Several European philoso-

phers, especially on the continent, use the expression common sense as synonymous with *intuition*; a faculty common to *all* men, of deciding immediately, and with unerring certainty, with respect to various simple, elementary truths. The unanimous consent of all who understand the meaning of the terms in which such truths are expressed, gives to their decision the character of infallibility. If it were not so, we could have no certain knowledge of any thing. For all reasoning proceeds on the supposition, that some points have been previously determined by intuition.

But the phrase common sense, or good sense, has a different signification, in familiar English use. It denotes the sound practical judgment of common men, in the common concerns of life. It *includes* intuition, indeed, as does all knowledge whatever. But it is far from being infallible, even on the subjects with which it is familiarly conversant. The most judicious practical men often differ from each other in their opinions; and their errors are frequently made evident, even to themselves, by the course of events. They may be more correct in their judgments on matters with which they are minutely acquainted, than philosophers and men of science, whose opinions may be affected by their favorite theories; and who are often too much engrossed with their own speculations, to admit of their being familiar with the common occurrences of life. It is not true, however, that the decisions of common sense, on all subjects, are more to be relied on, than the men who are versed in the sciences, or trained in professional pursuits by rules of art. Who would depend upon the competency of mere common sense to construct a time-

piece, to amputate a limb, to navigate a ship, to regulate a steam engine, to calculate an eclipse, to manage a cause in chancery, to carry on a diplomatic correspondence. *In connexion* with even those subjects on which we are all competent to form correct opinions, a speculating philosopher can start enquiries to which neither common sense, nor any other sense, can give a satisfactory answer.

The great obstacle in the way of obtaining a correct popular decision, on points of metaphysical speculation, is the almost insuperable difficulty of presenting the questions in terms which will not be misapprehended. The language used must of course be that of common life; no other being intelligible to those to whom the appeal is made. The customary significations of the words in use among them, is so firmly fixed in their minds, that any attempt to make them comprehend the philosophical meanings of the same terms, will generally prove unavailing. A question proposed to them, they interpret according to their own understanding of the language, which may be widely different from the intention of him who makes the inquiry. If metaphysicians find such difficulty in ascertaining each other's meaning, they ought not to be surprised, that they are misapprehended by those who are not skilled in their technical dialects. They have no just ground for claiming the verdict of common sense in favor of their positions, till they have good reason to believe that the common people distinctly understand what these positions are.

Of the illusion practiced upon common minds, by giving a metaphysical meaning to a term in familiar use, we have a striking example in the word *necessity*. This,

according to its original and literal meaning, as Edwards has justly observed, always implies *opposition* to the will, either actually existing, or at least *supposable*. In this sense, it forms a valid excuse for the neglect of that which, without such necessity, would be our duty. But metaphysicians have taken the liberty to apply the term to a case in which this essential characteristic of common necessity has no application; to the connexion between volition and the antecedents on which volition depends. If this connexion be represented as *certain*, they style it necessary, and thence frequently draw the conclusion, that it must be inconsistent with accountability. Their reasoning, if such it may be called, has the desired effect upon those who are acquainted with only one kind of necessity. "Men," says Edwards, "in their first use of such phrases as these, *must, can not, can not help it, can not avoid it, necessary, unable, impossible, unavoidable, irresistible, &c.*, use them to signify a necessity of constraint or restraint, a *natural* necessity or impossibility; or some necessity that the will has nothing to do in; which may be, whether men will or no; and which may be supposed to be just the same, let men's inclinations and desires be what they will. Such kind of terms, in their original use, I suppose among all nations, are relative; carrying in their signification, as was before observed, a reference or respect to some contrary will, desire, or endeavor, which is supposed, is, or may be, in the case.—It is to signify *such* a necessity, that they are first used, and that they are most constantly used, in the common affairs of life; and not to signify any such *metaphysical, speculative, and abstract* notion, as the connexion, in the nature and course

of things, which is between the subject and predicate of a proposition, and which is the foundation of the certain truth of that proposition.—We grow up from our cradles in a use of such terms and phrases, entirely different from this, and carrying a sense exceedingly diverse from that in which they are commonly used in the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists.—The habitual connexion which is in men's minds, between blamelessness and those forementioned terms, *must, can not, unable, necessary, impossible, unavoidable, &c.*, becomes very strong ; because as soon as men begin to use reason and speech, they have occasion to excuse themselves, from the natural necessity signified by these terms."

"When men, after they have been so habituated to connect ideas of innocency or blamelessness with such terms, that the union seems to be the effect of mere nature, come to hear the same terms used, and learn to use them themselves, in the forementioned new and metaphysical sense, to signify quite another sort of necessity, which has no such kind of relation to a contrary supposable will and endeavor ; the notion of plain and manifest blamelessness, by this means, is by a strong prejudice, insensibly and unwarily transferred to a case to which it by no means belongs."

Edwards proceeds to state some reasons why "the change of the use of the terms, to a signification which is very diverse, is not taken notice of or adverted to." In the first place, "The terms, as used by philosophers, are not very distinct and clear in their meaning ; few use them in a fixed and determined sense." Secondly, "The change of the signification of the terms is the

more insensible, because the things signified, though indeed very different, yet do in some generals agree. In *necessity*, that which is *vulgarly* so called, there is a strong *connection* between the thing said to be necessary, and something antecedent to it, in the order of nature ; so there is also in *philosophical necessity*.—In both kinds of necessity, there is a foundation for some *certainty* of the proposition that affirms the event." Certainty is the common quality which, according to Edwards's definition, belongs to *all* necessity, whether natural or moral, whether opposed to the will or not.

Some, perhaps, may be ready to say, that this perfect certainty, this infallible connection between volition and its causes, is the very thing which, in their view, renders necessity inconsistent with accountability. Let us then examine the ground which they take. The opposite of certainty is uncertainty. Suppose then, that in the case of the affections and desires, it were perfectly uncertain what objects would please us, and what would be viewed with aversion ; that there were no tendency in one, more than in another, to excite any particular emotion ; that it were a matter of absolute uncertainty whether this or that affection would spring up in the mind ; that the direction of our feelings were owing to no influence whatever ; would this circumstance render us accountable for these feelings ? Suppose farther, that our *imperative* volitions were entirely independent of our affections and desires ; that our natures were so formed, that we would as readily choose the object of our strongest aversion, as of our fondest attachment ; in short, that our imperative acts, as well as our emotions and desires, were all fortuitous ; would this be the consideration

which would give them a moral character; which would render us sinful or holy? Is there no certainty that a man will be better pleased with some things than with others; and that he will endeavor to obtain the objects with which he is most pleased? And does this certain connection between our volitions and our desires, and between our desires and the objects fitted to excite them, destroy responsibility? If any thing is so exactly suited to a man's taste and temper of mind, that he will *certainly* be pleased with it; does it follow, that the love and choice of that thing has no moral quality? Is it a dictate of common sense, that uncertainty is an essential condition of accountable agency? If it is certain, that all men will sin, till renewed by the grace of God, does it follow that they are not moral agents? If it is certain, that the saints in heaven will forever retain their integrity, does this prove that their obedience has no moral character?

It is far from being a doctrine of Edwards, that the same *external objects*, presented to different minds, or even to the same mind at different times, and under different circumstances, will be invariably followed by the same volitions. It is certain, that this will not be the fact. The merry song, which is welcomed by the man of gaiety, in his hours of festivity, will excite very different emotions in the mind of the same individual, if it meet his ear when under the pressure of heavy affliction. The shout of victory, which fires the breast of the conqueror, sends terror and dismay to the hearts of the vanquished. The hours of darkness, which invite the pious man to his devotions and his rest, allure the dissipated to their haunts of nocturnal

It is not pretended that human sagacity can so penetrate the state of the heart, and the nature of the motives by which it is influenced, as to be able to *predict*, with unerring certainty, what its volitions will be. But, according to Edwards, if the state and temper of the mind, with the motives which are before it, and the circumstances under which they are presented, are all given, the agent will certainly will in one particular way.

"Another reason," says Edwards, "why it appears difficult to reconcile it with reason, that men should be blamed for that which is necessary with a moral necessity, (which, as was observed before, is a species of philosophical necessity,) is, that for want of due consideration, men inwardly entertain that apprehension that this necessity may be *against men's wills* and sincere endeavors. They go away with that notion, that men may truly will, and wish, and strive, that it may be otherwise; but that invincible necessity stands in the way. —They find what may be called an *indirect willingness* to have a better will, in the manner before observed. And they do not consider, that this indirect willingness is entirely a different thing from properly willing the thing that is the duty and virtue required." "*That necessity*," says Archbishop Whateley, "can alone be pleaded as a justification, in which a man acts *against* his will. Want of freedom consists, according to the common sense of mankind, not in *following* our inclination, but in acting against it."*

According to the doctrine of *contingent* volition, it must often be the fact, that our imperative volitions are in opposition to our strongest desires and wishes. For if

* Appendix to Archbishop King, on Predestination.

there is no sure connection between our predominant desires and our acts of choice, then there is no ground of certainty, that the latter will not be opposed to the former. And if this be the case, if our volitions *happen* to be contrary to our wishes, are we more responsible for them, than if they were always in conformity with our strongest desires? "Supposing," says Edwards, "a man should actually do good, independent of desire, aim, inducement, principle, or end, is it a dictate of invincible natural sense, that his act is more meritorious or praiseworthy, than if he had performed it for some *good end*, and had been governed in it by *good principles* and *motives*?" It is not the doctrine of Edwards, but that of his opponents, which implies that our acts of choice may be opposed to our predominant inclinations.

"Whether the reasons that have been given," in Edwards's third section, "why it appears difficult to some persons to reconcile with common sense the praising or blaming, rewarding or punishing, those things which are morally necessary, are thought satisfactory or not;" yet he proceeds to shew, in the fourth section, as *matter of fact*, that "*it is agreeable to common sense, and the natural notions of mankind, to suppose moral necessity to be consistent with praise and blame, reward and punishment; that it is the very voice and dictate of this natural and vulgar sense.—This will appear, if we consider what the vulgar notion of blameworthiness is. The idea which the common people, through all ages and nations, have of faultiness, I suppose to be plainly this; A person's being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure; containing these two things; 1. His doing wrong, when he does as he pleases. 2. His pleasures being*

wrong. Or in other words, perhaps more intelligibly expressing their notion ; *A person's having his heart wrong, and doing wrong from his heart*. And this is the *sum total* of the matter."

"The common people do not ascend up in their reflections and abstractions, to the metaphysical sources, relations, and dependences of things, in order to form their notion of faultiness or blameworthiness. They do not wait, till they have decided by their refinings, what first determines the will ; whether it be determined by something extrinsic or intrinsic ; whether volition determines volition, or whether the understanding determines the will ; whether there be any such thing as metaphysicians mean by contingency, (if they *have* any meaning ;) whether there be a sort of a strange unaccountable sovereignty in the will, in the exercise of which, by its own sovereign acts, it brings to pass all its own sovereign acts. They do not take any part of their notion of fault or blame from the resolution of any such questions. If this were the case, there are multitudes, yea, the far greater part of mankind, nine hundred and ninety nine out of a thousand, that would live and die without having any such notion as that of fault ever entering into their heads.—Nor is their notion of *an action* some motion or exercise that begins *accidentally*, without any cause or reason ; for that is contrary to one of the prime dictates of common sense, namely, that every thing that begins to be, has some cause or reason why it is."

"The common people have no notion of liberty consisting in the will's first acting, and so causing its own acts ; and determining, and so causing its own determi-

nations; or choosing, and so causing its own choice. Such a notion of liberty is what none have, but those that have darkened their own minds, with confused metaphysical speculation, and abstruse and ambiguous terms.—And so far is it from being agreeable to common sense, that such liberty as consists in indifference is requisite to praise or blame, that on the contrary, the dictate of every man's natural sense through the world, is that the further he is from being indifferent in his acting good or evil, and the more he does either, with or without full and strong inclination, the more is he to be esteemed or abhorred, commended or condemned.”

It has been said, that notwithstanding President Edwards's distinctions and explanations, his *moral* necessity is really *natural* necessity; and as common sense decides, that the one is inconsistent with accountability, it must give the same verdict with respect to the other. If what is here meant is, that moral necessity is owing to *nature*, to the reality and relations of things, and not to mere chance; this is distinctly stated by Edwards himself. If the meaning is, that moral necessity implies *certainty*, a sure connection between volitions and their causes, this also is admitted. If it be farther said, that this relation is *improperly* called necessity; that it is not the original and common signification of the term; this is repeatedly declared by Edwards. But if it be affirmed, that there is *no difference* between natural necessity and that which is called moral; nothing can be farther from the truth. Is there no difference between being confined to a prison by bolts and chains, and being fixed down to a gaming table by a passion for play? Is there no difference between the law of

gravity which brings a weight to the earth, and the law of maternal tenderness which snatches an infant from the deadly embrace of a serpent? Yet the one is as *certain* in its operation as the other. One is as much owing to *nature* as the other.

It may be said, that the distinction between natural and moral necessity, though philosophically correct, is of no practical importance; that it will not answer the purpose of exculpating the innocent, or fastening a sense of ill desert upon the consciences of the guilty; that it will not be adopted by common sense, as a rule for discriminating between crime and misfortune. The *terms* in which the distinction is expressed, it must be admitted, are not well chosen. They are liable to perversion, as Edwards has sufficiently shewn. He who is pressed with a load of guilt, may endeavor to throw off the burden, by pleading that all necessity is necessity, and that whether natural or moral, it is alike inconsistent with accountability. But if a man is found in a horde of pirates, is it all one, whether he is there by his own will or against it; whether he was brought there by motives or by force; whether he loves their occupation or abhors it? Is this a distinction without a difference; a mere *metaphysical* line of discrimination? Does common sense never distinguish between want of inclination and want of opportunity; between the instigations of malice, and the mistakes of ignorance; between the avarice which oppresses, and the poverty which brings suffering in its train? The real difference between natural and moral necessity, as explained by Edwards, is this, that the one may be entirely *against the will*, while the other can not be; the very consideration

on which ill desert in the one case, and freedom from blame in the other, depends; one of the most important and practical of all moral distinctions.

When a metaphysician endeavors to obtain the judgment of common sense, in favor of his peculiar hypotheses, he frequently presents his inquiries in such a form, as to be greatly misapprehended, by those from whom the decision is to be obtained. The meaning which, in his own mind, he gives to the principal terms, is very different from the sense in which they are understood by men of common education. It is a dictate of commons ense, that, in willing, we are *free agents*; that we are never restrained from willing according to our predominant inclinations; never *compelled* to will *against* our will. The speculating philosopher endeavors to turn this acknowledged truth to his account, by interpreting the word *free* to signify, that our wills are subject to no directing influence of motives, habits, propensities &c.

It is a dictate of common sense, that man is an *accountable* agent; accountable not only for his external actions, but also for his volitions, because they are acts of his own will. From this, some draw the inference, that he is an *independent* agent; independent of all influence inclining him to will one way rather than another. Common sense decides, that a man is so far the *cause* of his own volitions, that he is the author of them; the agent who wills. From this, many infer that he causes himself to put forth such and such acts of choice; that he wills to will as he does.

According to common sense, when a man does as he pleases, that is, when his external actions depend on his will, he is in the enjoyment of *liberty*. From this some

infer, that liberty of *will* implies, that every free act of choice proceeds from antecedent choice; that a man is not free, unless he chooses to choose as he does. It is a dictate of common sense, that we are not under obligation to do that which we can not do, which we have *no power* to do; these expressions being understood in the literal and proper sense, to signify the want of opportunity, of bodily strength, of mental capacity, of sufficient knowledge, &c. Upon this, the metaphysician, and with him the sinner who is closely pressed with accusations of conscience, endeavors to put such a construction as to imply, that we are not under obligation to do what is required of us, unless we have *all* the power on which obedience depends; unless we have *moral* as well as natural power; unless we have a *willing mind*, as well as bodily strength; unless we have the *inclination* to will right, as well as intellectual capacity and knowledge; unless we have all that which gives *direction* to choice, as well as opportunity of choosing. Whatever it is which *prevents* a man from willing as he is required, is called inability, and is considered as releasing from obligation. Common sense decides, that we have the power of deciding between two rival *objects*. From this the inference is drawn, that we have the power of choosing between two opposite *choices*; that we have such an equal power of *contrary* volition, as is inconsistent with any directing influence, antecedent to the act of choosing.

Is not the common *inclination* to exonerate ourselves from the charge of guilt, frequently mistaken for the judgment of common sense? Does not this partiality in favor of our own character suggest the plea, that all

inability, of whatever kind it may be, is inconsistent with obligation? In the appeals which are made to common sense, on the subject of moral agency, is it not sometimes the object to produce a popular *effect*, rather than to learn the popular *opinion*? In political life, none are louder in their professions of regard for the voice of the people, than those who are most busily engaged in fabricating opinions, for the people to receive and adopt. Is there never any thing analogous to this, in the maneuverings of theological partisans?

SECTION XVII.

MEANS AND ENDEAVORS. FATALISM.

On the principles of Edwards's opponents, means of grace are useless—

They must be unavailing, unless there is a *connection* between means and ends—Misrepresentation of Edwards's views on this point—It is the doctrine of his opponents which breaks the connection between means and ends, so far as choice is concerned—It is his philosophy, and not theirs, that ascribes a directing influence to means and motives—Means which, without the grace of God, would be unavailing, may be effectual, when accompanied with his grace—Is it reasonable to urge upon sinners the duty of *immediate* repentance?—In what way, is a conviction of guilt to be fastened on their minds?

Fatalism—The argument of opprobrious names—It saves time and thought—Fatalists believe in the certainty of the *end* without reference to the *means* on which the end depends—Fatal necessity—Is the will a machine? The term fatalism applied by some to the divine perfections—Arminian fatalism—Choosing between things perfectly alike.

In the fifth section of the third part of Edwards's Inquiry, he considers the relation of his principles of moral agency to the efficacy of "*means and endeavors* for the avoiding of sin, or the obtaining virtue and holiness." One of the boldest and most unfounded measures of attack adopted by his opponents, is to charge upon his scheme an objection which has no application to *his* view of the will; but bears with full force against *their own*. For what purpose are means ever used, except to obtain some end which is supposed to be more or less *dependent* on the means? It is the *connection* between means and ends, that gives to the former all their power.

Now it is a fundamental principle of Edwards's scheme, that there is a fixed connection between volitions and the antecedents on which they depend. Among these antecedents, are the means which are used for the purpose of giving a direction to the will. But according to the opposite theory of volition, means and measures can do nothing more than give an *opportunity* for the will to act. They do not incline it to choose one way rather than another. This would be considered inconsistent with freedom.

"The question to be answered," says Edwards, "is, Whether, on the supposition of there being a real and true connection between antecedent things and consequent ones, there must be less of a connection between means and effect, than on the supposition of there being *no fixed* connection between antecedent things and consequent ones: And the very stating of this question is sufficient to answer it. It must appear to every one that will open his eyes, that this question can not be affirmed, without the grossest absurdity and inconsistency. Means are foregoing things, and effects are following things: And if there were no connection between foregoing things and following ones, there could be no connection between means and end; and so all means would be wholly vain and fruitless.—One thing would have no more *tendency* to an effect, than another; there would be no such thing as tendency in the case.—Therefore to assert, that a fixed connection between antecedents and consequents, makes means vain and useless, or stands in the way to hinder the connection between means and end, is just so ridiculous, as to say, that a connection between

antecedents and consequents stands in the way to hinder a connection between antecedents and consequents."

"So that the objection we are upon does not lie against the doctrine of the necessity of events, by a certainty of connection and consequence. On the contrary, it is truly forcible against the Arminian doctrine of contingency and self-determination; which is inconsistent with such a connection. If there be no connection between those events wherein virtue and vice consist, and any thing antecedent; then there is no connection between these events and any *means or endeavors* used in order to them. And if so, then those means must be in vain.—On these principles, it will not only follow, that men can not have any reasonable ground of judgment or conjecture, that their means and endeavors to obtain virtue or avoid vice, will be successful, but they may *be sure they will not*; they may be certain, that they will be in vain; and that, if ever the thing which they seek comes to pass, it will not be at all owing to the means they use. For means and endeavors can have no effect at all, in order to obtain the end, but in one of these two ways; either (1.) Through a *natural tendency* and influence, to prepare and dispose the mind more to virtuous acts, either by causing the *disposition of the heart* to be more in favor of such acts, or by bringing the mind more into the view of powerful *motives* and inducements: Or, (2.) By putting persons more in the way of *God's bestowment* of the benefit. But neither of these can be the case. *Not the latter*; for as has been just now observed, it does not consist with the Arminian notion of self-determination, which they suppose essential to virtue, that God should be the bestower, or

(which is the same thing) the determining, disposing author of virtue. *Not the former*; for natural influence and tendency supposes *causality* and *connection*; and that supposes necessity of event, which is inconsistent with Arminian liberty."

If this is a just representation of the case, why are the principles of Edwards so frequently misunderstood and perverted? Why is it supposed, that according to his scheme of doctrine, means and endeavors are useless? The illusion is produced by a gross misrepresentation of his views. He maintains that all events, except those which proceed immediately from the agency of God, are rendered certain *by* means, and *only* by means. The inference of the objector is, that the events are certain *without* means. From the principle that there is a fixed *connection* between cause and effect, the conclusion is drawn, that there is *no* such connection; that an event which is entirely dependent on a cause, will as soon take place without a cause as with one; that as houses are built by the labor of carpenters and masons, they may therefore come into being without any labor whatever; that because a man may pass from the United States to England in a packet ship, he may arrive there, without ever entering a boat; that as men are made eminent scholars by hard study, they may therefore become such, with no study at all.

Edwards holds, that acts of the will are determined by *motives*, including the state and temper of the mind, and that these are dependent on preceding causes. His opponents represent him as teaching the *opposite* doctrine, that volitions will be the same, whatever influence may be used to vary them. According to Edwards, the

means by which particular ends are obtained, are as certain as the ends themselves. Yet he is charged with holding, as Mohammedans do, that the end is certain, whatever may be the means which are brought to bear upon it. It is the doctrine of his *opponents* which severs the connection between means and ends, between cause and effect, so far as volitions are concerned. Whatever influence may be applied to the will, it must, according to their principles, give *no direction* to its acts of choice; it must do nothing more than furnish *an opportunity* for the will to exercise its sovereign, determining power; it must leave an equilibrium of tendency towards contrary volitions. So far as means and motives have any efficacy, in determining what a man's acts of choice shall be, so far they are represented as interfering with his freedom and accountability. But any course of measures, which will leave the will evenly balanced between opposite volitions, it is evident can have no tendency to turn it in favor of virtue.

It may be said, perhaps, that although we may use means with *others*, with a hope of success, yet that according to Edwards's system, a man can not adopt measures to influence the future acts of his *own* will, as this would imply a controlling power over his own volitions. But Edwards is far from maintaining that we can use no means which are adapted to give a right direction to our own future acts of choice. He does indeed deny, that *every* volition can be preceded by another; and he does not admit, that we produce our own acts of choice by merely *ordering* them. But there is nothing in his scheme of doctrine which implies, that we may not take measures to avoid future sinful acts,

by guarding against temptation ; and to secure upright conduct, by bringing into view the considerations by which virtuous resolutions are fortified. It is *his* philosophy, and not that of his opponents, which ascribes a directing influence to means and motives. If the mind, in willing, be such a contingent cause, that it acts independently of all the influence which may be exerted upon it ; if no direction is given to its choice, by any thing preceding ; then no arguments, exhortations, or persuasions of others ; no endeavors of our own to bring suitable objects before the mind, can be of any avail, towards turning the choice in favor of rectitude and godliness. Our volitions will take their own course fortuitously, in spite of all attempts to direct them.

But it is said, that Edwards's doctrine of dependent volition, is to be taken in connection with his belief in *total depravity*. He represents the corruption of man's nature to be such, that "his heart is wholly under the power of sin, and he is utterly *unable*, without the interposition of sovereign *grace*, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do any thing that is truly good and acceptable in God's sight." It is urged, that it is absurd to think of using means to call forth repentance, and faith, and obedience, from those who have *no ability* for the exercise of these graces. It is like taking measures for raising the dead. It is, if possible, still more absurd to exhort the impenitent to do any thing for their *own* conversion. This is calling the dead to raise themselves to life. It makes no difference, it is said, whether the inability of which they are the subjects is a *natural* or *moral* inability. For, according to Edwards, one will as effectually *prevent* the desired

change, as the other. Why do you exhort and warn, invite and intreat a man to turn from his sins, when all your efforts have not even a tendency *towards* bringing him to repentance? Why do you not go into the church-yard, and address your exhortations to those who are sleeping in their graves?

Now the seeming absurdity exhibited in representations like this, depends entirely on the assumption, that those means which are unavailing *without the grace of God*, must be unavailing *with* that grace. The doctrine of Edwards is, that "*without the interposition of sovereign grace*," the corruption of man's nature is such, that he is unable to do any thing which is truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. According to the statement of the objector, the presence and agency of the Spirit of God makes no difference in the case. The use of means with those who are under a moral inability to obey, is still considered absurd. We are not, in this place, discussing the question, whether, without the grace of God, those who are morally unable to do right are *accountable* for their actions. *The use of means* is the point now under consideration. To say that if *without* the grace of God, means would be unavailing, then they are entirely useless even under the present dispensation of grace, is as conclusive logic, as that of the husbandman who should affirm, that unless ploughing and sowing will bring a crop *without the rain of heaven*; then it is altogether idle to plough and sow; that if tillage without moisture has no *tendency* to "cover the valleys with corn," then it has no such tendency when accompanied with plentiful supplies of rain. We have no more control over the clouds which water the

fields, than over the showers of sanctifying grace. When our Savior called to Peter to come to him on the sea, the attempt to walk on the waves, if it had been made without divine assistance, would have had no tendency to bring him safe to the ship. Does it follow that it had no such tendency, when made *with* this aid from above?

But if the sinner is brought to repentance and obedience by the agency of the Spirit, why can He not effect this as easily *without* means, as *with* means? It is not denied that He *can*. But that He *does not* ordinarily bestow his grace, where there is an entire neglect of the means of salvation, is abundantly evident from observation. We have therefore no more reason to expect, that sinners will be converted without means, than the husbandman has to promise himself plentiful harvests, from fields on which no labor has been bestowed.

Again, it is objected, that if a man is unable of himself to yield his heart to the calls of the gospel, it is unreasonable to urge upon him the duty of *immediate* repentance. He must *first* be renewed by the spirit of God, before he can believe and obey; must he not then *wait*, till he finds himself converted, before he attempts to perform any duty? By no means. How is he ever to know that he is renewed, while he remains in the neglect of all that is required of him? When Christ commanded the lame man to rise and walk, how could he know that he was healed, but by actually walking? Does the husbandman delay to sow his field, till the earlier and latter rains have descended upon them, or till he knows that they *will* be given? You say, perhaps, that if the man who is now impenitent attempts to believe and obey, he will certainly fail. How do we know this? That

without the aid of divine grace, he will fail is admitted. But how do we know that this aid will not be granted, as soon as his attention is earnestly fixed upon what he is required to do? Do you say, that while he is impenitent, he will never use the means of grace *aright*—that he will not be *sincere* in his professed endeavors to reform? But how do we know, that God will not *give* him sincerity, and that immediately? If you call upon him to pray, and to pray in a right manner, how do you know that there will not be grace imparted to him, to incline him to worship in spirit and in truth? Among the many reasons which may be offered, for urging sinners to immediate obedience and faith, there are two of great weight: First, it is their *duty*, for the neglect of which, even for a moment, they have no excuse. Secondly, there is hope, that they will actually comply with the call; not indeed in their own unaided strength, but with grace from above. It may be added, that if they do thus comply, their salvation is sure; whereas, if they delay, even for an hour, they may be lost forever.

It may be said, and said truly, that one important preparative for genuine repentance is a *conviction of guilt*, and that this depends on a just view of the sinner's *obligation* to obedience. In what way, then, is this conviction most effectually produced, in the minds of those whose attention is awakened to the great interests of eternity? Are they to be told, that they are under no inability of any kind, either natural or moral; that they have not only the intellectual capacity and knowledge which obedience to the divine commands implies, but the *inclination* also? that they have neither any unwillingness to enter on the external performance of their

duty, nor any want of a disposition to obey from the heart, nor any feelings or propensities which tend to *prevent* the exercise of holy volitions? These are the things in which, according to Edwards, moral inability consists. Or shall the sinner be made to believe, that so far as obligation is concerned, there is *no difference* between moral and natural inability; that it is all one, whether a man is kept from the house of God by bars and bolts, or by evil dispositions; that any thing which prevents him from entering immediately on a virtuous life, whatever it may be, is a valid excuse for his continuing in impenitence; that obligation is commensurate with ability, moral as well as natural; that he can not be justly required to obey the commands of God, unless he has *all* the antecedents on which obedience depends; in short, that he is not bound to do any thing except what he actually does?

Or may we expect to deepen his sense of guilt, by giving him to understand, that volitions depend upon *nothing preceding*, for being as they are; that they are put forth fortuitously; that when he sins, he has equal power, both natural and moral, to the contrary; that with the same propensities and feelings, and under the same influence, human and divine, one man *happens* to repent, and another to persist in rejecting the offers of pardon? Does not faithful dealing with the impenitent require, that we shew him distinctly, that he has not *such* a power to change his own heart as will effect the change without special divine interposition; that there is something, by whatever name it may be called, which now prevents, and forever will prevent him from turning to God in sincerity, unless he is favored with the

renewing influence of the Holy Spirit ; and that this dependence on divine influence, though it implies that which some call moral inability, is *no excuse* for a moment's continuance in sin ?

FATALISM.

Different methods of discussing the subject of the will, are adapted to the comprehension and taste of different-classes of readers. While some are satisfied with nothing short of clear and solid argument, others are more easily brought under the influence of *opprobrious names and epithets*. In the selection and management of these, so that they may do execution, no small degree of skill is frequently exercised. One of the arts most commonly practiced for this purpose, is to make choice of a term which has *no definite meaning* ; so that there may be no danger, that any impropriety in applying it to the subject under consideration will be detected. It will then be sufficient, in most cases, to find some *one* point of resemblance, between some apprehended signification of the word, and the object which is to be rendered odious by the comparison. A large portion of every community is influenced more by *names* than by *things*, especially in matters of controversy. To meet a doctrine by *argument* is one thing ; to meet it by giving an odious appellation is another. "And yet," says a writer in the Biblical Repository, "there are many obvious and decided advantages in the latter course. It is much easier. It saves time, investigation, and thought. It can be resorted to by those whose minds are very imperfectly disciplined, and who are

very imperfectly qualified to examine the subject. It can be used by the tyro, as well as by the veteran in divinity. It requires little talent and little learning. It answers also, when argument fails; and it will often accomplish what argument would not do. . There are many minds which would be influenced by such a name, that would be little moved by an argument.”* These remarks are applied by the writer, to *Pelagianism*, so often used as a term of reproach. They are equally applicable to the charge of Fatalism.

The point of resemblance between Fatalism and the doctrine of Edwards is, that, according to both, events are *made certain* before they take place. The ground of *difference* between him and several classes of Fatalists is, that they believe in the certainty of the *end*, whatever *means may be used* to secure or prevent it; whereas it is his opinion, that no event *can* be rendered certain, except by the agency of causes and means on which it depends. The Mohammedan Fatalists hold, that the time of our departure from the world is so fixed, that all endeavors to prolong life must be unavailing. According to Edwards, the hour of death is certain, only because the antecedents on which the termination of life depends are certain. If in any case, there are means which, if adopted, *would be* sufficient to change the result, as known to God; yet it is certain they *will not* be used. So also our *volitions* are certain, because the influences and state of mind on which they depend are certain.

There is a class of Fatalists, however, who maintain the necessary connection between events and their cau-

* Biblical Repository for April, 1837, p. 411.

ses, yet trace back the series of causes, not to an omniscient and benevolent Creator, but to the nature and properties of *matter*, supposed to be eternal and self-existent. These are the *Atheistical* Fatalists, against whom Cudworth, in his "Intellectual System of the Universe," has employed his ample stores of learning, and his faculty of patient and thorough investigation. The whole of this elaborate work, with the exception of six or eight pages of introductory observations, is directed against this atheistical philosophy, with which Edwards's views has no more affinity, than with the sublimations of alchymy. But the forms of Fatalism are so greatly diversified, that a resemblance, in one or more points, may be traced, between some of them and almost any scheme of doctrine whatever. They furnish exhaustless supplies of offensive weapons, to those whose logical powers are principally displayed in dealing out opprobrious epithets to their opponents.

The phrase *fatal necessity* conveys to most minds the impression, that events to which it is applicable must inevitably take place, though ever so much *against our will*, and notwithstanding our most earnest desires and endeavors to prevent them. The conviction of this is so deep, that the principle is extended even to our *volitions*; implying that if they are dependent on any thing preceding, for being as they are, then we may be under a necessity of *willing against our will*. Edwards is very far from maintaining any such Fatalism as this. Referring to the ancient Stoic philosophers, he observes, "Whatever their doctrine was, if any of them held such a fate as is repugnant to any liberty consisting in our doing as we please, I utterly deny such a fate. If they

held any such fate as is not consistent with the common and universal notions which men have of liberty, activity, moral agency, virtue and vice ; I disclaim any such thing, and think I have demonstrated, that the scheme I maintain is no such scheme."

If nothing more is meant by the term Fatalism, than that events *are infallibly certain* before they take place, this is as much implied in God's *foreknowledge*, as in any doctrine which Edwards maintains. If the future occurrence of an event is certainly known, it is equally certain, that no means or endeavors which will be used, will be sufficient to prevent it.

As a *single point of resemblance* is considered by many a sufficient warrant for bringing on Edwards the charge of Fatalism ; so it is made the ground of the representation, that his principles exhibit the human will as a *mere machine*. According to this mode of reasoning, every created being and thing in the universe is a machine. For one or more points of resemblance may be found, between a machine and every thing else.

The logic of odious appellations has been carried to such an extent, that the term Fatalism has been applied to the certain connection between the *will of God* and his infinite wisdom and goodness. "Let us then consider," says the author of 'an Essay on Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures,' "what will be the consequences of supposing, that the divine will, in all its determinations and decrees whatsoever, is universally, certainly, and unalterably influenced by the superior fitness of things. Then there is nothing among all the works of God's creation, or his providence, or his government of creatures, through time or eternity, left free

to him, with a *liberty of choice or indifference*. What strange doctrine is this, contrary to all our ideas of the dominion of God? Does it not destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the Creator, and Governor, and Benefactor of the world, that most free and sovereign agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom? Does it not seem to make him a kind of intelligent instrument of eternal necessity, an almost mechanical medium of *Fate*?" Now what is "this strange doctrine," which is designated as Fatalism? It is this, that the divine will is invariably and certainly in accordance with infinite wisdom and goodness; that the Creator and Governor of the universe never prefers an inferior good to a higher; that it is morally impossible for him to do wrong. In the language of Dr. Samuel Clarke, "This is a necessity, not of nature and fate, but of fitness and wisdom; a necessity consistent with the greatest freedom, and most perfect choice. For the only foundation of this necessity, is such an unalterable rectitude of will, and perfection of wisdom, as makes it impossible for a wise being to resolve to act foolishly; or for a nature infinitely good, to choose to do that which is evil."*

It is true, that "it was a professed sentiment of some of the ancients, that '*Fate was above the gods.*'" But this imaginary Fate was something entirely distinct from the beings whose wills it was supposed to control. It was not their own wisdom and goodness directing their choice. It was no wisdom or goodness at all. It was blind necessity, void of intelligence and benevolent design. Would the ever blessed God be a more perfect

* Being and Attributes, Prop. IX.

being, if He were *not* certainly and unalterably determined to that which is right? Would it be better, that He should manifest the freedom of his will, by sometimes choosing that which is *opposed* to infinite wisdom and goodness? To defend his character from the imputation of Fatalism, must we deny the assertion of the Apostle, that it is *impossible* for God to lie? Would it bring glory to his name, to represent his purposes as *not* being invariably in accordance with infinite wisdom and rectitude?

“Something,” says Edwards, “much more like a servile subjection of the Divine Being to *fatal necessity*, will follow from *Arminian* principles, than from the doctrines which they oppose. For they (at least, most of them) suppose, with respect to all events that happen in the moral world, depending on the *volitions* of moral agents,—that God has a certain *foreknowledge* of them, antecedent to any purposes or decrees of his about them. And if so, they have a fixed, certain futurity, prior to any designs or volitions of his, and independent on them, and to which his volitions must be subject, as He would wisely accommodate his affairs to this fixed futurity of the state of things in the moral world. Such a subjection to necessity as this, is much more agreeable to the notion which many of the heathen had of Fate, *as above the gods*, than that moral necessity of fitness and wisdom which has been spoken of.”

If any reader of Edwards on the Will, should wish to select some portion of the work, for the purpose of giving exercise to his own metaphysical acuteness, he may find himself accommodated, by perusing the eighth section of the fourth part, on God's choosing between

things perfectly alike, as two particles of matter, two points of space, or two moments of time. For engaging in a discussion of apparently so little practical importance, the author gives this apology: "If any shall find fault with this reasoning, that it is going a great length into metaphysical niceties and subtilties; I answer, The objection which they are in reply to, is a metaphysical subtilty, and must be treated according to the nature of it." He then adds the following quotation from a work on the "Nature of the Human Soul." "For men to have recourse to subtilties, in raising difficulties, and then complain, that they should be taken off, by minutely examining these subtilties, is a strange kind of procedure."

SECTION XVIII.

EXISTENCE OF SIN UNDER THE DIVINE
GOVERNMENT.

All the actions of men are under the control of infinite wisdom and goodness—Does this make God the author of sin?—Permission of sin—No explanation of this subject is without its difficulties—Authority of Archbishop Whateley—The difficulties are not avoided by adopting the theory of contingent volition—Edwards does not hold that God is, in any proper sense, the author of sin; or that he produces it, by his immediate and positive efficiency—Is sin merely *negative*, requiring only a negative cause?—Natural and spiritual principles of action—Sin not permitted for the sake of any *good* which there is in it, or in its natural tendency—Mysterious nature of the subject—Is sin suffered to take place, for the sake of the good which may be obtained by overruling it?—Is sin the means of *greater* good, than would result from holiness in its stead?—The evil *design* of the sinner—Is there a brighter display of the *divine glory*, in consequence of sin?—In what does the declarative glory of God consist?—Manifestation of the *power* of God, in overcoming difficulties—Display of the divine *wisdom*, in overruling sin for good—Manifestation of the *goodness* and *mercy* of God—Opportunity afforded for the exercise of his *justice*—What *can be* the reason that sin has been suffered to take place?—Instrumentality of second causes—Laws of nature in the moral world—*Means* are employed in the divine administration—May not the best measures become, by perversion, the occasion of sin?—Important point of inquiry—Is sin the means of the *greatest* good?—Two hypotheses respecting the permission of sin—We are not required to show that either of them *must* be true—Can not God produce universal holiness, by his immediate agency?—Is there any limit to the *power* of God?—Difference between the highest *supposable* good, and the highest *attainable* good—Are the interests of some individuals advanced, at the expense of the welfare of others?—Which of the two hypotheses that have been mentioned, respecting the permission of sin, did Edwards adopt?—Perfect happiness of God—Does He *prefer* the sin which is committed to holiness in its

stead?—Must we necessarily believe either that sin is the means of the greatest good, or that it can not be entirely prevented without destroying moral agency?—Can *all* sin be prevented in any possible moral system?

Testimony of Scripture—Hardening of Pharaoh's heart—The purposes of God, in suffering sin to take place—Wickedness overruled for good—Is it, according to Scripture, overruled for *greater* good than would result from obedience?—Crucifixion of Christ—Does God ever *prefer* sin to holiness, all things considered?

THE consideration which, in the view of Edwards and his followers, gives the highest value to the doctrine of dependent volition is, that it places all the actions of accountable agents under the control of infinite wisdom and goodness. It represents the Supreme Disposer of events as holding in his power all the causes and occasions, the influence and motives on which the volitions of his creatures depend; so that, throughout the numberless worlds which he upholds and governs, not a purpose is formed, not a choice is made, which He has not power to prevent. But this consequence of the doctrine, so rich in consolation to its advocates, is made the ground of the most specious, and the most frequently reiterated objection, on the part of its opposers. The sum and substance of a large portion of what is written against Edwards's views of accountable agency, is the allegation that it *makes God the author* of sin. When a writer has, in his own opinion, fastened this consequence on his opponent, he considers himself as fairly excused from all farther attempt at argument. He has only to close the discussion by an exulting appeal to popular assent.

We are therefore called upon to look at this formidable objection, so far at least as to inquire what it means,

and what it does not mean ; and how far it is applicable to the doctrine of Edwards. In what way, according to the principles which he maintains, is the agency of the Creator to be regarded as having a connection with the existence of sin ? He holds that all volitions, and therefore sinful volitions, are dependent on antecedents which are primarily dependent on the will and power of God. Nothing takes place fortuitously. All events, not excepting even acts of choice, proceed from causes, occasions, and circumstances, which may be traced back, through intermediate agencies, to the self-existent cause of all things. Voluntary acts, as well as all other changes, are under his control ; as He has at his command all the secondary causes and influences upon which they depend.

With respect to sin particularly, Edwards holds, that God is "a disposer of the state of events, in such a manner, for wise, holy, and excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be permitted or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow.—It properly belongs to the supreme and absolute Governor of the universe, to order all important events within his dominion, by his wisdom : But the events in the moral world are of the most important kind ; such as the moral actions of intelligent creatures, and their consequences. These events will be ordered by something. They will either be disposed by wisdom, or they will be disposed by chance ; that is, they will be disposed by blind and undesigning causes, if that were possible, and could be called a disposal. Is it not better, that the good and evil which happen in God's world, should be ordered, regulated, bounded, and determined, by the good pleasure of an infinitely wise

being, who perfectly comprehends within his understanding and constant view, the universality of things, in all their extent and duration, and sees all the influence of every event, with respect to every individual thing and circumstance, throughout the grand system, and the whole of the eternal series of consequences; than to leave these things to fall out by chance, and to be determined by those causes which have no understanding or aim?"

It is as disingenuous as it is common, for disputants to charge upon the doctrine of an opponent an objection which bears, with equal force, against their *own* opinion. In no case, perhaps, has this measure been more frequently adopted, than in discussions respecting the origin of evil. It is a subject which throws formidable difficulties in the way of every attempt to explain it. A disputant can, without either skill or effort, bring these difficulties to bear on his opponent; but he will not find it so easy to keep them from recoiling on himself. It is objected to Edwards's view of dependent volition, that it makes God the author of sin. On this he observes, "If there be any difficulty in this matter, it is nothing peculiar to this scheme.—If it will *follow at all*, that God is the author of sin, from what has been supposed of a sure and infallible connection between antecedents and consequents, it will *follow because of this*, viz. That for God to be the author or orderer of those things which *He knows beforehand* will be infallibly attended with such a consequence, is the same thing in effect, as for him to be the author of that consequence. But if this be so, this is a difficulty which equally attends the doctrine of Arminians themselves; at least, of those of

them who allow God's certain foreknowledge of all events: For on the supposition of such a foreknowledge, this is the case with respect to every sin that is committed: God knew, that if He ordered and brought to pass such and such events, such sins would infallibly follow. —That must be unreasonably made an objection against our differing from the Arminians, which we should not escape or avoid at all by agreeing with them." Archbishop Whateley, referring to the difficulty of accounting for the origin of evil, observes; "Let it be remembered, that it is not peculiar to any one theological system: let not therefore the Calvinist or the Arminian urge it as an objection against their respective adversaries; much less, an objection clothed in offensive language, which will be found to recoil on their own religious tenets, as soon as it shall be perceived, that both parties are alike unable to explain the difficulty; let them not, to destroy an opponent's system, rashly kindle a fire which will soon extend to the no less combustible structure of their own."*

Even those who take the ground that volitions are strictly *contingent*, so that circumstances, occasions, and motives have no influence in determining whether they will be right or wrong volitions, do not escape from the consequence which they are so ready to charge upon the opposite doctrine. For if God foresees, that such and such agents, if created, will, at such and such times, certainly happen to sin, the same difficulty meets us still. He is the author of beings who He knows will sin. If we even go so far as to deny his foreknowledge of particular acts; yet we must admit, that He creates beings

* Appendix to Archbishop King, p. 117.

with such natures, that He knows they are continually *liable* to sin ; and as there is no uniformity in the results of chance, He knows that some of them, at least, will actually sin.

We shall be far from doing justice to the opinions of Edwards, by merely stating affirmatively what he holds to be true on this subject. It is necessary also to take into view what he does *not* believe respecting it ; and what does not follow from his doctrine of dependent volition. In the first place, he does not admit that God is, in any proper sense of the term, the *author* of sin. "If by the author of sin," he observes, "be meant the *sinner, the agent, or actor of sin, or the doer of a wicked thing* ;—in this sense, I utterly deny God to be the author of sin, rejecting such an imputation on the Most High, as what is infinitely to be abhorred ; and deny any such thing to be the consequence of what I have laid down."

Secondly, Edwards does not hold, that God is the producer of sin by his immediate and *positive agency and efficiency*. "There is a great difference," he observes, "between God's being concerned thus, by his *permission*, in an event and act, which in the inherent subject of it is sin, (though the event will certainly follow on his permission,) and his being concerned in it by *producing* it, and exerting the act of sin ; or between his being the *orderer* of its certain existence, by *not hindering it*, under certain circumstances, and his being the proper *actor or author* of it, by a *positive agency or efficiency*.—Inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High ; but on the contrary, arises from the withholding of his action and energy, and under certain circumstances, necessarily follows

on the want of his influence ; this is no argument that He is sinful, or his operation evil.—It would be strange arguing indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them *to themselves*, and necessarily sin when He does so, that therefore their sin is not *from themselves*.”

The opinions distinctly expressed by Edwards, in different parts of his work, will not allow us to put such a construction upon the preceding quotations, as to imply, that in his view, God exercises no positive agency with respect to the *antecedents*, *causes*, and occasions of sinful volitions. Even on the supposition, that man is the *sole* directing cause of his acts of choice, the Creator has had a positive agency in bringing this cause into being. Or if there are other antecedents, occasions, and circumstances, which have an influence in giving direction to volition ; these have not had their origin in that which is merely negative, that is, in nothing. They have proceeded from something which may be traced back, through a series of changes, to the agency of the First Cause of all things.

It is an opinion of long standing, that sin is of a *negative* or *privative* character ; and therefore, that it requires only a negative or privative *cause*. If it be absolutely *nothing*, then indeed, it requires only a negative cause, that is, no cause at all. It is negative in this sense, that it implies a *want* of conformity to the divine law. But it is not *merely* negative. It is positive transgression. The sinner not only fails to do right ; but he is active in doing wrong. What agency can be more positive, than the deeds of the robber, the incendiary, and the assassin ? What mental affections are more active than envy, malice, and revenge ?

But may we not account for the existence of sin by a negative *cause*? The mere want of *right* volitions may be ascribed to the absence of that influence upon which such volitions depend. But the putting forth of *wrong* volitions implies an influence which is real; which is something more than bare negation. It may be said, that a man does evil, because he is *not prevented* from doing so. This seems to be the view taken of the subject by Edwards. And so far as the explanation goes, it may be correct. But this is not a *full* account of the case. The question remains, Why do all men *need* to be restrained from sin? In other words, Why do all actually sin, when not prevented by divine interposition? The answer must be, that there is something in their own nature and state, and in the nature and condition of things around them, which *induces* them to sin. It may be said, that they sin for the want of something to *counteract* and *overbalance* this unfavorable influence. But this implies, that there is something real to be counteracted. Blank nonentity does not require a countervailing power, to prevent it from doing mischief.

According to Edwards, "When God made man at first, he implanted in him *two kinds of principles*." The *inferior*, or natural principles, are common to all men, good and bad; such as self-love, natural appetites and passions, &c. The *superior*, or spiritual principles, are peculiar to the virtuous. The inferior principles, when *left to themselves*, without the regulating, purifying, and harmonizing influence of the other, infallibly lead to sin. As the superior principles "immediately depend on divine communications and influences of God's Spirit," if these are *withheld* or *withdrawn*, sin will be the cer-

tain consequence.* This withholding or withdrawing divine grace, is what Edwards appears to consider the negative or privative cause of sin. But besides this, there is, according to his own account, a positive influence, in the inferior principles implanted in our common nature, and in the objects with which we are surrounded. Without these, there would be neither holiness nor sin in our race; there would be no moral agency of any kind.

Thirdly, Edwards does not hold, that such an ordering and disposing of events, by divine wisdom, as that sin will certainly take place, is on account of any *good* which there is, either in *sin itself*, or in its *natural tendencies*. "Sin," he says, "may be an evil thing, and yet that there should be such a disposal and permission, as that it should come to pass, may be a good thing." It is the *permission* of sin, not the sin itself; the will of God, not the act of the sinner, that is represented as good.

This brings us to the most difficult point on the freedom of the will; the most mysterious point, we may say, in the whole compass of theology; to the inquiry, *Why* has a God of infinite power and goodness, suffered that to take place which is wholly evil in itself, and in all its natural tendencies? It becomes us to approach a subject so far transcending our powers of comprehension, with humility and awe; to say of the righteous disposer of all events, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. Can we attempt an explanation of this great mystery, the origin of evil, without incurring the hazard of saying that which will

* Edwards on Original Sin, Part IV, Ch. 2.

set limits either to the *power* or the *goodness* of the Ruler of the universe? It becomes us to acknowledge the extent of our *ignorance* on the subject; rather than to advance any positive statements, with a confident reliance on their correctness. We are here led to inquire,

Fourthly, Do the principles maintained in the preceding parts of Edwards's work imply, that sin is suffered to take place, *for the sake* of the sin itself, or even for the sake of the good which is to result from the *consequences* of sin. He holds that God disposes "the state of events in such a manner, for *wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes*, that sin, if it be permitted, or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow." Now where are we to look for these "most excellent ends," which are to be obtained from the permission of sin? Are we to find them in the *sin itself*, in the *consequences* of the sin, or in the consequences of *something else*? If sin is evil, and only evil, nothing can be plainer, than that it can not be chosen, or even permitted, by a being of infinite benevolence and holiness, *for its own sake*. Has it, in its nature, any *tendency* to produce good? If not, can it be suffered to take place, for the sake of the *consequences* which naturally result from it?

But it is said that sin, though wholly evil in its nature, its design, and its proper tendencies; yet may be *overruled* for good, by infinite wisdom and power. If by overruling sin, be meant controlling and counteracting its injurious influence and results; is it possible that this can be done, in any way more effectually, than by an entire prevention of sin itself? If there were no sin in the universe, there could be no evil consequences of

sin. But it is farther said, that God is able, not only to oppose effectually the *evil* tendency of sin, but to convert its results into positive good. This is not denied. It is admitted to be the prerogative of the Most High, to bring good out of evil. He can cause the wrath of man to praise him. But how does it appear, that He can bring *greater* good out of sin, than He could obtain from holiness in its place? If this can be done, in every instance in which sin is not prevented; then every transgression of the divine law answers a *better purpose*, under the controlling power of infinite wisdom, than could be effected by holiness in its stead. On this supposition, what just ground can there be, for any man to feel regret or sorrow for sin, committed either by himself or others? If he views his disobedience, as it stands related to the controlling providence of God, will he not have reason to rejoice, that he has done that which will finally result in greater good, than would have followed from his obedience? Why should we grieve at beholding crimes of the deepest dye committed around us; if they will all be so overruled, as to bring greater glory to God, and greater good to his kingdom, than would have been the consequence of the practice of virtue, in place of these crimes? Has the pious man any ground to fear that he may dishonor the cause which is dearest to his heart, by future relapses into sin? However gross may be his declension, however aggravated may be his violations of covenant vows; yet upon the supposition which we are now considering, his fall will result in greater good, than would have followed from a steadfast adherence to the divine commands.

In answer to this, it will probably be said, that the *design* of the sinner is in direct opposition to the design of God, in permitting and overruling the sin. The intention of the sinner is always evil. The purpose of God is always benevolent. This evil design, on the part of the transgressor, is therefore to be deplored, though the sin itself is overruled for good. But the evil design is the very essence of the sin, without which it would not *be* sin. To overrule the sin for good, is to overrule this evil design. There is therefore no more reason for regretting the evil design, than for regretting the sin. Indeed, they are one and the same thing.

What is this immense good, for which sin is overruled, and which is supposed to be greater than any which could have been obtained, if there had never been any sin in the universe? It is said, in general terms, to be a brighter *display of the glory of God*, and in consequence of this, a higher exaltation of the glory and happiness of his kingdom. But in what does the declarative glory of God consist? Evidently, in a manifestation of his *excellence*; of his infinite attributes; his omnipotence, his omniscience, and his boundless goodness. "It is highly proper," says Edwards, "that the effulgent glory of God should answer to his *real* excellency; that the splendor should be answerable to the real and essential glory."* The excellence of the divine perfections consists in their *doing good*; in their producing and perpetuating the highest amount of holiness and happiness. Is there then greater excellence in the power which secures a given amount of holiness and happiness by *means* of sin, than in a power which would secure the same.

* Observations on Decrees and Election, Sec. 10.

amount *without* the sin? In other words, is a given amount of good, with a mixture of evil, of so enormous an evil as sin, more to be desired, than the same amount of good, *without* any accompanying evil? If sin has come into the created system, in consequence of measures which infinite wisdom has ordained *for other purposes*; it may require a higher exercise of power, to overrule it for good, than to effect the same amount of good, from uniform and perfect obedience, on the part of all the subjects of the divine kingdom. But are we to infer from this, that God has introduced sin into the universe merely for the *sake* of overruling it, and in that way, making a display of his power? It may be said, there is a more illustrious manifestation of his power, on account of the *difficulties* to be overcome in bringing good out of evil. But is it the part of a wise being, to *introduce* difficulties into a system of measures, merely for the sake of shewing his ability to overcome them? What valuable purpose would be answered, by displaying a power of overruling the natural tendencies of sin; when if all sin could as well be prevented, there would be *no occasion* for the exercise of power in counteracting its influence?

But, you may ask, is not the *wisdom* of God more displayed in controlling the evil tendencies of sin, than it could be, in preventing it altogether? Wisdom, as is commonly supposed, consists in employing *the best means*, to obtain *the best ends*. If the end to be gained is the same, if the amount of positive good, the degrees of holiness and happiness be given, whether secured by means of sin, or in some other way; is it the part of wisdom to make choice of sin, in preference to holiness,

as the means of obtaining the desired end? If the sin already exist, or if it be the certain consequence of measures adopted for benevolent purposes; it may indeed require greater wisdom to overrule it for good, than to derive the same amount of good from uniform and perfect obedience. But is it wise to *prefer* sin as the means, when no additional good is to be gained in the end?

Is there greater *goodness* displayed, in producing the immeasurable blessedness of the divine kingdom, through the instrumentality of sin, than in obtaining the same results, if practicable, without the sin? It may be said, and truly said, that if there had been no sin in the universe, there would have been no opportunity for the manifestation of that most glorious attribute, the *mercy* of God. We have reason to believe, that no one of his adorable perfections raises higher the song of praise in heaven, than the unsearchable riches of his grace; the dispensation of infinite mercy through the mediation of Christ. But *why* is this? Because that, in this revolted world, there is such *need* of mercy. When sin had extended its ravages over the whole of our race, all must have perished forever, or the foundations of the divine government must have been shaken, if there had been no interposition of redeeming grace. It is because so costly a sacrifice was necessary, to render the salvation of the world consistent with the stability of the throne of eternal justice, that saints and angels tune their harps to the song of redemption by the cross of Christ. But if such measures could have been adopted, as would secure the highest good of the universe, and, at the same time, exclude all sin, from every part of the creation, what *occasion* would there have been for the exercise of

mercy? If there had been no sin, there would have been no call for the extension of favor to the guilty. There would have been no transgressors needing forgiveness. Have we sufficient ground for affirming, that sin has been introduced for the express purpose of giving an opportunity for the exercise of pardoning grace; for the manifestation of that mercy which would never have been needed, if sin had been wholly excluded from the universe?

It may be said again, that the *justice* of God, his *abhorrence of iniquity*, and his determination to *punish it*, are exhibited to his creatures, in a far more impressive manner than would have been possible, if sin had never been suffered to enter the divine kingdom. But for what purpose are the terrors of avenging justice displayed, if it be not to deter from the commission of iniquity? This would have been needless, if sin could have been entirely prevented by other measures, not interfering with the direct means of holiness and happiness. Does God suffer the blessedness and glory of his kingdom to be marred by sin, for the sake of shewing how greatly he abhors it? Are the woes of the eternal prison inflicted for the purpose of manifesting his hatred of that which, without impairing the happiness of his creation, He could have prevented from ever entering his kingdom? It is commonly understood, that the proper object of punishment, is to maintain the authority of law, by deterring from disobedience. But if *all* had been preserved in uniform rectitude, there would have been no use for the influence of punishment. Do you say, that without the condemnation of some, others could not be preserved in unwavering obedience? This is ad-

mitting that sin and punishment are not introduced for the sole purpose of displaying the divine character.

What then *can be* the reason that sin has been suffered to come into the world, if God is able, in all cases, to prevent it; and if it has not been permitted, either for its own sake, or on account of its natural tendencies, or because, by the overruling providence of God, greater good can be derived from it, than from perfect obedience in its stead? There is yet another supposition, which it is believed, is not inconsistent with the great principle maintained by Edwards, that God has a controlling influence over human volitions. It is evident from the constitution and movements of the world around us, that in his unsearchable wisdom, He accomplishes his purposes, to a great extent, through the instrumentality of *second causes*. If He *can* bring all events to pass by his immediate efficiency, without the use of means, yet He sees fit not to do this. We have abundant evidence, that in the physical world at least, all the common changes are brought about, by various successions of finite causes. These successions are made to proceed according to established and uniform *laws*, commonly called laws of nature, but more properly denominated "ordinances of heaven." It is only by special interpositions of providence, that this appointed order of sequences is occasionally varied, at the command of Him from whom these ordinances originally proceeded.

Now there are laws in the *moral* world, as well as in the physical. The great designs of infinite wisdom are carried into execution through the instrumentality of finite agents, acting under the influence of motives presented according to the laws which regulate the courses

of events around them. So far as we are able to observe, He does not ordinarily see fit to interrupt these laws by immediate interpositions of his power. It may be said, that being above any control or hindrance from his creatures, He can effect his purposes as surely without means as with them. But can He promote the highest welfare of his kingdom *as well* without means as with them? If He can, why does He ever make use of means? Have we not reason to believe, that to attain the greatest amount of good in the universe, it is necessary that there should be finite causes and influences, and that these should operate by uniform laws?

May we not then reasonably suppose, *that the measures which, in their direct operation, are best fitted to advance the happiness and holiness of the divine kingdom, may become, by perversion, the occasion of sin?* Even in the material world, the agencies which are among our richest blessings, are occasionally the means of distressing calamities. The air which we breathe, sometimes brings pestilence and death into our frame. The fire which is so necessary to our existence, is the same devouring element which consumes our dwellings, and carries devastation and wretchedness through our cities. The winds which waft to our shores the riches of foreign lands, often bury our ships in the waters of the deep. The same law of gravity which binds the hills to their foundations, and the ocean to its bed, drives the torrent forward in its work of desolation.

In the *moral* world also, it is evident that there are successions of causes and effects, and that the order in which they proceed is ordinarily subject to laws; not merely to commands and prohibitions, but to the influ-

ence of other motives of various kinds. In the character and application of these causes and laws, there is, in some respects, great uniformity; in others, an almost endless diversity. While it is so ordered, that the whole human race partake of the nature of their common ancestor, there are, nevertheless, innumerable varieties in the mental constitutions of different individuals, in the changes wrought upon them by education, in the circumstances in which they are placed, and in the motives which are presented before them. Have we not then reason to believe, that the arrangement of causes and laws which is best calculated to do good, and which will actually produce a greater amount of good than any other system of measures, will also, in the crossing, and intermingling, and interfering of various trains of sequences, be the occasion of evil? Our principal temptations arise from those provisions of nature, of providence, and of grace, which are eminently adapted to the production of good. The constitution of our bodies, which so admirably fits us for the duties and enjoyments of life, furnishes numerous facilities for criminal indulgence. Our appetite for food and drink, and the bountiful supply of the fruits of the earth, which are necessary to our preservation and happiness, in the present state, are motives to intemperance and gluttony. The institution of *property*, without which the whole population of the globe must be reduced to the poverty and wretchedness of savages, and to one twentieth part of its present numbers, is the occasion of an incalculable amount of avarice, oppression, and sensuality. The knowledge of the being of a God, without which there could not be even a semblance of religion, is perverted

to the vile purpose of profaning his holy name. The gospel of Christ, which recovers a part of our race from the dominion of sin, and fills the heavenly world with its highest notes of praise, aggravates the guilt and condemnation of those who refuse to accept of its offers.

In these, and in all similar cases, the good which is the direct result of the causes in operation, may greatly overbalance the evil of which they are indirectly the occasion; and may exceed the good which is to be obtained from overruling the evil. Now the point of our enquiry is this, *Whether the causes are introduced for the sake of the good which is to arise from overruling the sin which they occasion; or for the sake of the higher good which the same causes more directly produce; and whether, except to obtain this latter result, the sin would be suffered to take place at all.* Is the earth made to pour forth its treasures to us, for the sake of preserving our lives, and gratifying our innocent desires; or to furnish an opportunity of overruling for good the ruinous excesses of the drunkard and the voluptuary? Were mighty works wrought by Christ and his apostles, among the inhabitants of Bethsaida and Chorazin, *for the sake* of hardening their hearts, and rendering their doom at the day of judgment less tolerable than that of Tyre and Sidon; or for the purpose of making known the dispensation of mercy by which our fallen race was to be saved? Has God given a revelation of his will in the Scriptures, to furnish an opportunity for such men as Paine and Voltaire to scoff at the displays of his wisdom and grace; or to send abroad in our world those tidings of salvation, by which multitudes that no man can number, are prepared for the assembly of the blessed

in heaven? When the Holy Spirit descends, with special power and mercy, upon our churches, our villages, and our cities, is it for the purpose of hardening the hearts of those who resist his influence; or is it with the design of recovering great numbers from the dominion of sin to the kingdom of holiness?

It must be admitted, that the good to be derived from the overruling of evil, is to be *taken into the account*, in the estimate made by Him who "seeth the end from the beginning," and who looks through *all* the consequences of the measures which He adopts. But can we prove, that the good to be brought out of evil is the *principal* object of those dispensations which are the occasion of sin? Are we even sure, that these measures would have been adopted *at all*, if sin and its consequences were the *only* results that would follow from their introduction? In other words, would not all sin be prevented, if this could be done, without deranging and impairing the system of means which, in their *direct* tendency, are necessary to the highest amount of holiness and happiness? God requires his creatures to obey Him, in the *very circumstances* in which He has placed them. Do we know, that He could so *change* these circumstances, in particular instances, as to secure perfect obedience, without affecting injuriously some other portion of his moral kingdom?

According to the supposition just made, sin is not itself the means of the greatest good; but is the consequence of those *measures* which are the means of the greatest good. The supposition is indeed inconsistent with the doctrine, that sin is produced by the *immediate* agency of God. For if this were the fact, sin and its

consequences must be *all* the results proceeding from the divine purpose to produce it. No *other* good could follow from the measure. And as the only alternative, in the case of moral agents, is between sin and holiness, obedience and disobedience, it is evident, that in those instances in which God is supposed to produce sin by his immediate agency, he must *prefer* the sin with its consequences, to holiness and its consequences. It is also evident, that upon this supposition, as He is perfectly benevolent, He must prefer the sin because it can be made to answer a better purpose than holiness in its stead.

But if He introduce intermediate agencies and influences, these may be the direct cause of great good, while they are indirectly the occasion of some evil. Sin may be preferred, not to holiness, but to the loss of the good which is dependent, in part at least, upon the same antecedents which occasion the sin. The violation of the Sabbath, by a portion of the community, may be preferred, not to a uniform and devout observance of its consecrated hours, but to a repeal of the law which requires it to be kept as holy time. Theft may be preferred not to honesty, but to such measures for removing the temptations to stealing, as would abolish the institution of property.

Here then, we have *two suppositions*; one, that sin is either produced or permitted, on account of the good which is to be obtained from overruling it; the other, that sin is suffered to take place, not solely or chiefly for the sake of the good to be brought out of the evil; but on account of the good which proceeds more directly from the antecedents which also occasion the sin. Our present purpose does not require, that the reality of the

latter supposition be established by direct and positive evidence. I do not affirm, that it *must* be true. It is sufficient that the *other* branch of the alternative does not necessarily follow from the doctrine of dependent volition, maintained in Edwards's work on the Will. *That* supposition comes to us charged with heavy objections; such as these, that sin, in every instance in which it is actually committed, answers a *better purpose* than holiness; that for this reason, God *prefers* it to holiness in its stead; that He really *chooses* that that should take place, which he condemns in his law, and follows with the heaviest punishment; that He invites, and earnestly urges men to repent, when He prefers that many should reject his invitations, and persist in their iniquities; that no Christian has reason to regret that he has sinned, as his disobedience, in the circumstances in which he was placed, and under the influence bearing upon him, will be overruled to as great or greater good, than could have been derived from obedience in its stead. All these, and other similar objections, are made to bear on the doctrine of dependent volition, only on the ground that the supposition which involves them is a *necessary* consequence of that doctrine; and that the only way to escape from them, is to adopt the opposite principle of *contingent* volition. But if a different supposition, consistent with the dependence of volition upon preceding influence, is even *possible*, it effectually removes the foundation of these objections. This indeed does not establish the truth of the supposition *as a fact*, unless it can be shewn, that this is the *only* one not containing these difficulties, and yet consistent with the principles of dependent volition.

Some perhaps may say, that although God does not produce *sin* by his *own immediate* agency, yet He may in this way produce universal *holiness*, and thus dispense with those intermediate agencies which are the occasion of sin. He sanctifies multitudes by the power of his Spirit. If He can convert one, why not all? If He can subdue those who have been long hardened in habits of iniquity, why can He not *prevent* all sin by beginning the work of sanctification at the first commencement of accountable agency? It is not denied that He *can* do this. But it remains to be shewn, that this would be a better way of promoting the interests of the moral universe, than that which infinite wisdom has seen fit to adopt. Can it be proved, that by setting aside those secondary causes which are the occasion of sin, there would not be a sacrifice of the means which are necessary to the attainment of the highest perfection of the divine kingdom? The Creator and Governor of the world, has so constituted the beings and materials of which it is composed, that events commonly take place, according to established laws, and through the operation of a succession of causes, influences, and means. Who will undertake to tell what would be the consequence, if He were to interpose his immediate agency, so constantly, as to render all these causes and laws inefficacious and useless?

Will it be said that the supposition, that God can not produce the highest good without the use of means, implies a *limitation of his power*? If this be so, then to affirm that *sin* is the necessary means of the greatest good, implies a limitation of his power. It must be admitted, that there is a limit somewhere. But does a

limit in the nature and relations of creatures, imply a limit of the perfections of the Creator? Limitation is a necessary condition of every thing finite. It implies no imperfection either of the power or the goodness of the Creator, that He does not confer on his creatures that which is inconsistent with the essential nature of finite and created beings. It is not owing to any defect in his benevolence, that He does not bestow on each of them infinite happiness. It implies no limitation of his power, that He does not work contradictions; that He can not form a square without angles; or make the circumference of a circle a straight line; or, when a change has already taken place, cause it not to be a past event. The doctrine that God can control at pleasure the volitions of his creatures, does not necessarily imply, that he can do this, in the best manner, without means. There may be a difference between the highest *supposable* good of the universe, and that which can be actually attained, considering the limited natures and capacities of all created beings. There is no necessary limit to our suppositions, short of an infinite number of beings, all infinitely great, holy, and happy, through the whole of an endless duration. But the actual system of the created universe, and we have reason to believe, every possible system, is very different from this.

It may be farther said, that to produce good, either by means of sin and punishment, or by such causes and laws as are the occasion of sin, is to obtain the good at the expense of the welfare of those who sin. Where, it may be asked, is the goodness, or even the justice, of sacrificing the interests of some, for the purpose of enlarging the happiness of others? In answer to this, it

may be observed, that there is no violation of *justice* in the case, if none are made to suffer but those who *choose* to sin ; and if they are punished no more than they *deserve*. If the penalty be duly proportioned to the guilt of the offender, his condemnation can not be rendered unjust, from the consideration that it is overruled for the benefit of others.

But would it not imply a higher exercise of *goodness*, you ask, to effect the same amount of positive good, *without* any accompanying evil ? Undoubtedly it would, provided this were practicable. But who will undertake to shew, that the highest interests of the intelligent creation can be secured, without any hazard to the welfare of individuals ? Exposure to sin and condemnation does not belong exclusively to the doctrine, that human volitions are dependent on causes, and circumstances, and occasions which are under the control of the Creator. Let it be supposed, that the acts of the will are strictly contingent, so that nothing preceding has any influence in determining whether they shall be holy or sinful. Why was such a constitution given to the will, that multitudes would happen to fall into sin, and be consequently exposed to a hopeless condemnation ? Do you say that from the *very nature* of moral agency, this is unavoidable ; that the power of contrary volition necessarily implies, that there can be no capacity for holiness, without a liability to sin ? Then thousands are exposed to remediless ruin, for the sake of the benefit which *others* are to derive from the possession of moral agency. If no accountable agents had been brought into being, none would have been liable to be punished for their iniquities. But now, the responsible nature which ex-

alts the obedient to the blessedness of heaven, proves ruinous to multitudes of others. This must have been foreseen by Him who formed the spirit of man within him. Boundless goodness chose not to sacrifice the joys of the paradise above, even to avoid the tremendous evils which were to follow from the perversion of moral agency. If the objector affirms, that human volitions are so entirely fortuitous, that they could not be foreseen, even by the omniscient Creator; then upon this supposition, those who may chance to fall into sin are left to perish, that provision may be made for the welfare of others who may happen to remain faithful. It is much easier to start objections to any received opinion on this mysterious subject, than to propose an hypothesis by which all the difficulties may be avoided.

Which of the two suppositions considered in the preceding pages, respecting the existence of sin under the divine government, has President Edwards himself adopted? According to his representations, has sin been suffered to enter the world, because it could be overruled for greater good than holiness in its stead? Or, because it could not be prevented, without a removal of those occasions, which, as causes also of positive good, are necessary to the highest holiness and happiness of the divine kingdom? There are a few expressions, in his section on this subject, which have frequently, if not commonly, been so understood, as to furnish ground for the belief, that he adopted the former of these opinions. If this be a correct interpretation of his language, it would seem, that he has admitted an hypothesis, which, although perhaps not in *opposition* to the principles advanced in the preceding parts of his book, is not a *neces-*

sary consequence of them ; and has needlessly exposed his scheme to a list of the most plausible, if not the most formidable objections which have been made against his work. As another supposition can be made, which is not inconsistent with his leading principles, and which is not incumbered with the same difficulties ; we are not reduced to the alternative of either adopting his views respecting the permission of sin, or rejecting his doctrine of accountable agency. "Sin," he observes, "may be an *evil* thing ; and yet that there should be such a disposal and *permission*, as that it should come to pass, may be a *good* thing.—There is no inconsistency in supposing, that God may hate a thing as it is in itself, and considered simply as evil, and yet that it may be his will it should come to pass, *considering all consequences*." If by all consequences, in this place, he intends, not only the consequences of *sin* overruled for good, but also the consequences of those *causes* and *influences* which are the occasion of sin ; his supposition does not necessarily imply that God wills sin because it can be made to answer a better purpose, than holiness could in its stead ; but because the prevention of sin, by the suppression of those causes of good which are also the occasion of sin, would involve the loss of beneficial results overbalancing the evil of sin and its consequences. This does not imply, that sin with its consequences is preferred to holiness with its consequences ; but that the *permission* of sin is preferred to its *prevention* by such means as would involve the sacrifice of great good.

Edwards proceeds to observe, "I believe there is no person of good understanding, who will venture to say he is certain, that it is impossible it should be best, tak-

ing in the whole compass and extent of existence, and *all consequences* in the endless series of events, that there should be such a thing as moral evil in the world." We may assent to this, without admitting, that moral evil and its consequences are better than obedience in the same circumstances, together with its consequences. Still farther on, he observes, "God does not will sin as sin, or for the sake of any thing evil; though it be his pleasure so to order things, that He permitting, sin will come to pass; *for the sake of the great good* that, by His disposal, shall be the consequence." It is not denied, that God so orders the course of his providence, that great good is made to result from the commission of sin. But are we justified in affirming, that *greater* good is thus obtained, than could be, from perfect obedience in place of the sin? This supposition carries with it the objections already stated; that all the sin which is committed answers a *better purpose* than holiness; that, for this reason, God *prefers* it to holiness in its stead; that he *chooses* that that should take place, which he condemns in his law; &c. &c. Still, it may be true, that God "so orders things, that He permitting, sin will come to pass, for the sake of the great good that by his disposal shall be the consequence;" not of the sin merely, but also, of the causes, influences, and laws of providence, which are the occasions of the sin. The argument from *the scriptures*, on this point, is to be considered in the sequel.

From the perfect *happiness* of God, Edwards derives an argument, to prove that nothing takes place which, in "view of all consequences, through the whole compass and series of things, is contrary to his will." Does

this imply, that He is more happy in contemplating the final results of the existing system of moral and providential dispensations, involving the endless sin and punishment of innumerable multitudes, than He could have been, in the attainment of the same amount of positive good, *without* this immense evil? Do you say that the same degree of good could be obtained in no other way than by the intervention of sin? Then you admit, that there is a limitation somewhere. Why may we not be allowed to place this where it will not involve the supposition, that a violation of the divine law is a necessary means of the greatest good, and therefore, that God is better pleased with all the sin which is committed, than He would be with perfect obedience in the same circumstances? The actual amount of sin and misery in the world is the same, whether we consider sin as the means of the greatest good, or as incidentally occasioned by the measures which infinite wisdom adopted, to promote the highest welfare of the universe. But the latter supposition avoids the consequence that God *prefers* the sin, to holiness in its stead. He does, it is true, prefer the *measures* of his own appointment, to such a system of measures as would prevent all sin, and at the same time, fail of accomplishing the highest good. But this does not necessarily imply, that He prefers sin with its consequences, to holiness with its consequences.

Of those who believe that sin exists by divine permission, there are many who appear to take it for granted, that the only alternative respecting the reason of this permission is, that sin is suffered to come into the world, either because it is the means of the greatest good; or, that it can not be prevented without *destroy-*

ing moral agency. One class of divines, holding firmly the opinion, that the Creator has a full control of the volitions of his creatures, are led to the conclusion, that there can be no satisfactory reason, why He should suffer sin to take place, unless He can so overrule it, as to render it the means of greater good, than could be derived from holiness in the same circumstances. Another class, deterred from adopting this opinion, by the formidable objections to which they think it is exposed, appear to find no way of escape from these difficulties, but by embracing the hypothesis, that God can not interpose his agency, in the prevention of sin, without interfering with moral obligation. To maintain this position, they may sometimes resort to arguments which imply, that the Creator can exercise *no* effectual control over the volitions of his creatures. The two classes of theologians are thus placed in an attitude of earnest contention with each other. But if the case admits of suppositions differing from *both* of these, we are under no necessity of encountering the difficulties belonging to one of them, for the sake of avoiding the objections to which the other is exposed.

Some writers who admit, that God has such a controlling influence over the wills of his creatures, that He can restrain sin *in particular instances* without impairing accountability ; yet deny that it follows from this that He can prevent *all* sin, either in the best system of the universe, or in *any possible* moral system. They argue, that the providential dispensations which would be the most favorable to the prevention of sin, in some portions of his dominions, and in particular circumstances, might not be equally efficacious, in other portions,

and in different circumstances ; that the accumulation of influence upon certain individuals, might require a withdrawing of more or less influence from others ; that the *punishment* of some may be necessary to preserve others from falling ; that the sufferings of the eternal prison may be the means of guarding the hosts of heaven against revolt ; that just punishment implies the existence of sin ; that *all* sin can not be prevented by punishing sin.

With *supposable* moral systems, we have little or no concern ; unless, in reasoning upon them, arguments are used, which in their application to the existing system, may have an influence in favor of error. All our interests, and all the interests of our fellow creatures, lie in that system to which infinite wisdom has given reality. We are not called upon to expend our logic upon worlds of our own creation. Besides, the main argument to prove that all sin can not be prevented, in the *best* possible system, the argument from *fact*, is not applicable to imaginary systems. From the perfect benevolence of the Creator we infer, that the system which He has seen fit to adopt is the best possible ; or at least, that there can be none other *better* than this. But from this, sin is not in fact excluded. We are therefore warranted in the belief, that it can not be excluded, with any gain, on the whole, to the universe. But we can not argue in this way, concerning a moral system which is merely conceived as possible.

It may perhaps be thought presumptuous in us, ignorant and erring beings, to inquire after the reasons for which the omniscient Creator adopted the existing plan of providential dispensations ; that we ought to be con-

tent with referring it solely to the decision of his sovereign will ; that we ought, with becoming reverence, to say, " Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But we may at least be permitted to believe, that the system which *seems* good to infinite wisdom and benevolence *is really so* ; that it is better than any which human ignorance can propose in its stead.

TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

Too much space, perhaps, has already been occupied with *speculation* concerning the origin of evil. The results of our discussion of this subject can be of little or no value, except so far as they are found to accord with the testimony of scripture. He who gave to the soul of man all its powers and native propensities, and who, in the arrangements of his providence, brings before our minds, numberless objects which are fitted to have an influence on the will, surely knows what purposes He has formed and executed, in reference to the existence of sin. Whatever He has revealed concerning it, we are bound to receive, as not only the truth, but *all* the truth which it is necessary for us to know on a point which it is hazardous for any one to discuss, except with the inspired volume open before him. If we venture to advance at all, beyond what is there disclosed, it should be only for the purpose of meeting the cavils of those who are not prepared to place implicit reliance upon the divine testimony, or who, though they profess to do this, yet indulge in speculations which set aside the real meaning of scripture.

President Edwards has quoted largely from the Bible, in support of the opinions which he has adopted on this subject. How far are his positions sustained, by the authority of scripture? In the first place, Does "God permit sin, and at the same time, so order things in his providence, that it certainly and infallibly will come to pass, in consequence of his permission?" By the permission of sin, Edwards explains himself to mean "not hindering it." There are numerous passages in the history of the King of Egypt by Moses, in which God declares that He *will* harden Pharaoh's heart; and others in which it is stated that God *has* hardened Pharaoh's heart. Of Sihon, King of Heshbon, it is said, that "the Lord hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate." Of the Kings of Canaan it is recorded, that "it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle." The Apostles Peter and John, referring to the crucifixion of Christ, say, "Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel *determined before to be done*.—Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked* hands, have crucified and slain."* Without great violence done to these and other similar passages, they can not be made to mean less than this, that God so ordered the course of his providence that, He not preventing, the wickedness spoken of, would certainly be committed.

* Deut. ii, 30. Joshua xi, 20. Acts iv, 27, 28, and ii, 23.

This interpretation is rendered, if possible, more manifest, when we consider the *purposes* which God is represented as accomplishing, by thus permitting sin. Of Pharaoh He says, "I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him.—I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." Of Sihon it is said, "The Lord thy God hardened his spirit &c., that he might deliver him into thy hand." Of the Kings of Canaan, it is said, "It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly."*

Secondly, Particular instances of wickedness are mentioned, which *God overruled for good*. Joseph, speaking to his brethren respecting their selling him to the Midianites, says, "Ye thought evil against me, but *God meant it unto good*, to bring to pass as at this day, to save much people alive.—God did send me before you to preserve life."† That the crucifixion of Christ has been overruled for good, will not be denied by those who believe that all who are saved have redemption through his blood.

Thirdly, Is it any where declared in the scriptures, that sin is overruled for *greater* good than could have been obtained from obedience in the same circumstances? The sin of Joseph's brethren was overruled for good, in preserving the lives of the Israelites in a time of famine. But is it said in the Bible, or are we able to prove, that

* Exod. x, 1, 2, and xiv, 3, 4. Deut. ii, 30. Josh. xi, 20.

† Gen. l, 20, and xlv, 5.

if Jacob's sons had been uniformly faithful in the discharge of their duties to each other, God could not have so ordered the course of his providence, as to furnish subsistence for their families, during the season of scarcity which He knew to be approaching? The obstinacy of Pharaoh was overruled for good. "For this cause," says the Almighty, "have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."* But can we prove that if Pharaoh, when exalted to great authority and distinction, had *obeyed* the divine commands, God could have found no way of manifesting his own power, and declaring his name to the Egyptians and surrounding nations? The sin of those who were concerned in the crucifixion of Christ, has been overruled to the salvation of a world. But is it declared in the scriptures, that there was no other way in which, by his death, he could become an atoning sacrifice for sin? If *none* of our race had ever sinned, there would have been no *necessity* of an atonement, to save us from the curse of a violated law? It is true, that by the entrance of sin into our world, and the consequent plan of redemption, there is an opportunity for God to "shew, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus." But do the scriptures inform us, that He could have found no way for the full manifestation of his glorious perfections, if all his creatures, in the circumstances in which He placed them, had been perfectly obedient to his commands?

Fourthly, Is it revealed to us, that God *prefers* the disobedience of his creatures to their obedience, in every

* Exod. ix, 16.

instance in which they actually sin? It is admitted, that He prefers not to interpose, in all cases, to *prevent* them from sinning. But does this imply, that He needs their sin, rather than their obedience, to answer the purposes of his unsearchable wisdom and goodness? What saith the scripture? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.—Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die?—I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."* The declaration here is not limited to those who will forsake their iniquities and live. It includes those who will perish in their sins. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." Can it be true, then, that in every case in which the sinner persists in his rebellion, God *prefers* this impenitence to his conversion and salvation? When He solemnly declares, that He has *no pleasure at all*, that the wicked should die, is it still true, that in numberless instances, He has *greater* pleasure in their continuance in sin, than He would have, if they should repent and obey his commands? Does the sinner declare the truth when he says, if I turn and live, God will prefer that; but if I choose to continue in my present course, He will prefer that?

I am aware, that it is often said, that *in itself considered*, God always prefers the repentance and salvation of sinners, but that, *all things considered*, He often prefers their continued impenitence and ruin. If by the phrase taking all things into consideration, we mean this, that God, in view of all beings and all events, with their relations and consequences, sees fit to leave the sinner to

* Ezek. xviii, 23, 32, and xxxiii, 11.

himself, rather than to make such a change in the measures of his providence and grace, as would be required to *bring* the transgressor to repentance ; this is a preference of the existing plan of his *own* operations, to a different one ; not a preference of the *sinner's* present course, under these dispensations, to his acceptance of offered salvation. It does not imply, that the *consequences* of sin, under the system of measures which infinite wisdom has adopted, are better than the consequences of holiness would be, under the same system ; but all the results taken together of the present system of divine operations, are better than the results of a system so very different, as would be one which should prevent all sin.

When God had delivered to the children of Israel the ten commands, "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness," on Mount Sinai, he addressed Moses in these words, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all* my commandments *always*, that it might be well with them and their children forever."* Is this language consistent with the supposition, that in the circumstances in which they were, and under the influence which was acting upon them, He preferred that most of them should disobey him and fall in the wilderness, as he foresaw they would? Rehearsing afterwards their multiplied iniquities, and threatening them with terrible judgments, He adds, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they *would* consider their latter end."* These passages have a prospective reference. But addressing his people, by the Prophet and the Psalmist, He thus refers to their *past* conduct ; "O that thou hadst heark-

* Deut. v, 29, and xxxii, 29.

ened to my commandments. Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. —O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways.”* These texts may be consistent with the supposition, that God prefers to leave men to go on in their own chosen way, rather than to make such a change in the plan of his dispensations, as would secure universal obedience to his will: but can they be made to agree with the assumption, that in the circumstances in which He has placed men, and under the influence which actually bears upon them, He prefers, in numberless instances, that they should disobey, rather than obey him?

* Isaiah xlviii, 18; Psalm lxxxi, 18.

SECTION XIX.

METAPHYSICAL REASONING.

Is the religion of the Bible a metaphysical religion?—Is it to be supported by metaphysical reasoning?—The scriptures take some things for granted, as already known to the reader—Application of philosophical reasoning to the *interpretation* of scripture—Apparent discrepancy between declarations of scripture and scientific discoveries—Accommodating scripture to our preconceived philosophical opinions—The real meaning of scripture is immutable—Philosophical explanations of scripture—*Confirming* the declarations of the Bible by metaphysical reasoning—Blending scriptural truth with philosophical theories—Shewing the *grounds and reasons* of what is revealed—Can we believe what we do not understand?—Is theological philosophy, of some sort or other, unavoidable?—Will our theology be correct, if our religious philosophy be erroneous?—Can what is true in theology be false in philosophy?—If we have correct views of the *doctrines* of scripture, are our philosophical opinions of *any importance*?—The philosophy contained in the Bible itself—Meeting the authors of erroneous theories upon their own ground—Undertaking to indoctrinate plain uneducated men in metaphysical philosophy—Philosophical *preaching*—President Edwards's sermons—Relation of his work on the Will to revealed theology—Has he proposed any theory of his own respecting the Will?—Arminian metaphysics.

PRESIDENT EDWARDS commences the thirteenth section of the fourth part of his work by observing, that "it has often been objected against the defenders of Calvinistic principles, that in their reasonings, they run into nice scholastic distinctions, and abstruse *metaphysical subtilties*, and set these in opposition to *common sense*." To this he replies, in the first place, that "if that be made an objection against the foregoing reasoning, that

it is *metaphysical*, or may properly be reduced to the science of metaphysics, it is a very impertinent objection ; whether it be so or no, is not worthy of any dispute or controversy. If the reasoning be *good*, it is as frivolous to inquire what science it is properly reduced to, as what language it is delivered in."

It is undoubtedly very proper, that *metaphysical science* should be supported by metaphysical reasoning. But the "Calvinistic principles" to which President Edwards refers, are commonly understood by their advocates to be principles of *theology*. Is theology then a metaphysical science? Is the *religion of the Bible* a metaphysical religion? Is its authority to be supported by metaphysical and philosophical reasoning? At the present day, when there is so much discussion and controversy respecting the connection of philosophy with religion, it is important that we have a distinct understanding of what is meant by the phraseology which is used in speaking on the subject. It is *revealed* religion, the religion of the scriptures, to which our inquiries relate. In what sense, and to what extent, is this to be supported by philosophical and metaphysical reasoning. Is reason to be considered the foundation of our belief in the truths of Christianity, because it shews us, that the Scriptures are a *revelation from God*, or because it *interprets* this revelation, or because it proves, by arguments, *independent* of the divine testimony, the truth of the doctrines revealed?

We have no occasion, at present, to inquire concerning the philosophy of religion, any farther than it relates to *revealed* truth. The remarks now made are intended for those who, as Christians, believe that "all scripture

is given by inspiration of God," and as Protestants, hold that this is a *sufficient* rule of faith and practice, "that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* to all good works." There may be religious truths, discoverable by the light of nature, which are not contained in the scriptures. But they can not be essential to salvation or holiness of life, as are the truths to which infinite wisdom has given the preference, in its message of mercy to our world; which are accompanied with the sanctifying influence of the Spirit; and which have such an overpowering efficacy, in the conversion of the heathen. They have an influence which belongs to none of our finely-wrought metaphysical speculations.

It is said, that the sacred writings *take for granted* some things, as points previously understood. They take *all* things for granted as points already known to the *omniscient* mind. If some things are represented as previously known to *us*, they are such simple and obvious truths, as require no metaphysical reasoning to discover or prove them. A right understanding of the scriptures does indeed require a previous acquaintance with the *language* in which they are written. But a distinct apprehension of the meaning of words, does not imply a knowledge of all the truths which can be expressed in those words. An acquaintance with arithmetical numbers and their names, does not include all that can be known of arithmetic. A familiarity with the terms and definitions in Euclid's Elements, does not constitute all the knowledge which we can have of geometry. Several important doctrines which Christ himself taught, were in direct opposition to the previous opinions of his hearers. The most sublime and surpri-

sing truths may often be expressed in terms perfectly familiar. It was the very design of a revelation intended for all mankind, to make known the high and wonderful purposes of heaven, in the simple language of common life. A knowledge of this language does not necessarily imply any special philosophical attainments ; or any previous acquaintance with the truths to be revealed. There are some *very important* religious truths, such as those relating to the divine attributes and works, which may be demonstrated by arguments not drawn from the scriptures. But these are so distinctly stated in the word of God, that they constitute a portion of revealed truth. In establishing the authority and inspiration of the Bible, there is a call for very various forms of reasoning, some of them complicated, but not commonly metaphysical, except when adduced in reply to metaphysical objections.

The most specious plea in favor of theological philosophy, is its alledged use in *interpreting and explaining* the scriptures. When we have settled the inspiration of the sacred volume, the next object of inquiry is to ascertain *what it means*. How is this to be done? In the same manner substantially, as we determine the meaning of other writings, by the established principles and rules of interpretation. If there is a place here for any kind of *philosophy*, it is for the philosophy of *language* ; and for the philosophy of the *mind*, so far as this is necessary to illustrate the nature and signification of language. The writers of the scriptures, though inspired of God, were themselves men, speaking to their fellow men, in the language of men. They spake and wrote with the intention of being understood. That kind of learning, therefore, which explains the language

of the Bible, which shews the design, the views, and the situation, of the writers, which places us in the condition of the persons addressed, is of the highest importance, in directing our inquiries after the true meaning of scripture. The knowledge which is wanted for this purpose, is such as was common to the husbandmen, the shepherds, and the fishermen of Judea; the philosophy with which Peter, and Matthew, and John were familiar.

When we have investigated the meaning of a passage of scripture, have we the farther inquiry to make, whether what is affirmed there is true; whether there is not some latent error, to be detected by our philosophy; whether there is not danger, that a revelation from the infinite fountain of truth may deceive us? From the infallible verity of the divine declarations, some appear to have derived a specious rule of interpretation; as it is certain the scriptures contain no errors, we can discover their meaning, it is said, by determining, as the result of philosophical investigation, what is true, and what is false; as nature and revelation are not contradictory, nothing is contained in the one, which may not be found in the other; God having given us, in his word, no clearer light, than He has in his works. If this were a principle universally applicable to the inspired pages, it would go to shew, that as a standard of doctrine, they are useless, teaching us nothing but what we may learn by our own speculations. But the fact is, that the scriptures make known to us many truths which are far beyond the reach of our natural powers of discovery; and many others which are even *contrary* to the probable opinions which we form without the aid of revelation.

As natural science teaches us many things concerning which the scriptures give us *no* information ; so the scriptures reveal to us doctrines respecting which the philosophy of nature is altogether silent.

Are we then to receive as indubitable truth, every statement which the scriptures, when explained according to the common rules of interpretation, appear to make ; however contradictory to established principles of science ? A distinction is here to be made, between those scriptural declarations the interpretation of which is *distinct and indubitable*, and others, the meaning of which is to us *obscure and doubtful*. There are no laws of interpretation by which we can determine the sense of *all* passages of the Bible, with equal certainty. In the exposition of different portions, there is *every degree* of evidence, from a bare probability, to that which admits not even a shade of doubt. The advocates of scriptural authority on the one hand, and of the opposing claims of scientific discovery on the other, appear to have gone to opposite extremes, in their respective positions. The biblical interpreter avails himself of the unquestionable principle, that the scriptures are the word of a being who can not err, and who will not deceive. Thus far, his ground is sure. To a passage of this perfect book, he applies the acknowledged rules of exegesis, till he thinks he has discovered its meaning. If you express a doubt with respect to the doctrine which he supposes it to contain, he charges you with replying against God ; whereas, what you call in question, is not the certainty of the divine declarations, but the infallible correctness of his exposition. It may be that there is only a slight probability in favor of his construction. It is

often the fact, that different learned expositors, professing to apply the same laws of exegesis to the same passage, arrive at different conclusions respecting its meaning. From the unerring certainty of the divine declarations, we are not to infer the unerring certainty of our expositions. The proof which we have, that a particular doctrine is contained in a given passage is no greater, than the evidence that we have a correct knowledge of the *meaning* of the passage. This may be so imperfect, as to admit of being overbalanced by evidence of a different character. Calling in question any man's infallibility in the interpretation of scripture, is not calling in question the omniscience or veracity of its divine Author.

There are, however, many passages of the Bible, concerning the true meaning of which, there can be no reasonable doubt. And though a particular doctrine may not always be found, with perfect certainty, in any *single* text; yet a comparison of different passages may furnish unquestionable proof, that it is contained in the Bible. In these cases, the evidence is not to be set aside, on account of any opposing evidence, short of that which would be sufficient to bring in question the authority of the scriptures as a divine revelation. It is only in cases of *doubtful* interpretation, that the results of scientific inquiry can, with any propriety, be applied to the supposed testimony of scripture. When from the observed phenomena of the solar system, we arrive at the conclusion, that the earth revolves round the sun; we may compare the degree of probability of this result, with exegetical proof, that according to the scriptures, the sun moves round the earth. But many philosophers seem to think themselves authorized to explain

away *any* passage of the word of God, however unequivocal may be its meaning, if it is not in accordance with their astronomical, or geological, or metaphysical theories. This is the other extreme, in relation to the comparative claims of scriptural and scientific results. The true medium is to estimate the degree of probability that we interpret the *works* of the Creator aright; and compare this with the probability that we put a correct interpretation upon his *word*. The same perfect Being is the author of both. There can be no real inconsistency between them. If we think we have discovered that they are contradictory, it is certain that we have misconstrued either one or the other. On the one hand, very doubtful passages of scripture are not to be so understood, as to contradict the most evident laws of nature; nor, on the other hand, are philosophical or metaphysical hypotheses to be admitted, in opposition to manifest declarations of scripture.

When an appeal is made to biblical testimony, in relation to any philosophical opinion, it is preposterous to *take it for granted*, that the language of the scriptures is to be so explained, as to accord with the opinion proposed. This is assuming that the position in question is already settled, independently of scriptural authority, which is made to yield to the superior authority claimed by philosophy. It is *explaining away* what we profess to regard as the decision of infallible inspiration. The proper mode of proceeding, is to endeavor to obtain, by the laws of biblical criticism, the signification of the texts referred to, and also the evidence, from other sources, in favor of the opinion to be tested; and then to compare the degree of probability of the latter, with the

probability that our interpretation of the texts is the true one. It is too often the case, however, that we first determine for ourselves what doctrines and precepts the scriptures *probably* contain ; and then set ourselves at work, to extort from them a meaning in conformity with the opinions which we have already formed. There is no text, however unequivocal its genuine meaning, which may not be made to yield to this transforming process. The word of God may be appealed to, in support of as many different systems of theology, as ardent theorists choose to propose. It is not unfrequently the case, that far greater liberties are taken with the scriptures, than would be tolerated, in interpreting any other book. The true point of inquiry is, what *saith* the scripture ; what meaning does its language convey to us ; and not, what construction can be *forced* upon it, by the perverted refinements of criticism. We are not, indeed, required to believe assertions which are intuitively or demonstrably false. If such were found in the Bible, they would prove it not to be the word of God. But He may reveal to us mysteries which our own unaided reason would never have discovered. We are not to learn what the signification of a passage *is*, by previously deciding what it *ought to be*.

The meaning of scripture is invariably the same ; that which was given it when originally written. The same portion of the Bible has not different significations in different ages of the world ; for different ranks in society ; for different denominations of Christians. Its import may be more correctly *understood*, at one time than another. Different persons may give a true interpretation of the same text ; and yet the knowledge of one

respecting it may be far more comprehensive than that of the other. The "two great lights" and "the stars" which it is said God created, all understand to be the luminaries in the heavens above us. In this, the astronomer and the unlettered peasant agree. But they may have widely different opinions of the distances, magnitudes, and natures of these bodies. This implies, however, no disagreement with respect to the fact that God created them. In the progress of scientific discovery, our knowledge of what is contained in particular portions of scripture may be greatly enlarged, without contradicting the imperfect views which had been previously entertained of the same passages. As the development of providential dispensations are extended from one age to another, a flood of light may be thrown upon some of the ancient prophecies, without necessarily opposing former expositions of the same predictions.

Philosophical reasoning, it is sometimes said, may be applied with great advantage, to the *explanation* of Scripture. If all that is intended by this, is shewing the *meaning* of the sacred writings, the facts and the truths which are there revealed; explaining, in this sense of the word, is the same as interpreting. But it is frequently used to signify something more; investigating the *causes*, and *reasons*, and *relations* of what is stated in the scriptures. The *harmony* which exists between the truths presented in the word of God, and the light which shines upon us from his works and his providence, is a very proper subject of devout meditation. Philosophical explanations of scripture doctrines may be allowed, as gratifying a rational curiosity, if they are made to keep their proper place as ingenious speculations; and

are not considered as necessary to establish our *belief* in these doctrines; nor so *blended* with the simple truths of revelation, that the one will be liable to be mistaken for the other. Shall we attempt to *confirm* that which we admit to be the testimony of God himself; of that God who has given us all our powers of reasoning and judging, and who, if He were willing to deceive us, could stamp deception upon the very faculties of the soul? Are we to suspend our belief of a doctrine revealed by God, till we can prove it by other evidence. We can have no higher ground of assurance, than the declaration, "Thus saith the Lord." When we have shewn that the Bible is the word of God, and have clearly ascertained the meaning of any portion of it, all reasonable inquiry concerning the *truth* of what we find there is at an end.

The differences of opinion which occasion such animated controversies, among the numerous divisions and subdivisions of parties in the Christian world, are frequently nothing more than different modes of *accounting* for doctrines in which most of the combatants are agreed. Now there would be some reason for this zealous adherence to philosophical theories, if these constituted the *evidence* by which the doctrines are supported. Rejecting the former might be considered as removing the foundation of our belief in the latter. But with truths supported by the testimony of God, the case is widely different. We may equally believe them, whether we adopt this or that mode, or *no* mode of shewing their connection with other truths. The great danger to the cause of religion is not so much, that this or that unfounded theory may be advanced, as that *any* metaphysical

theory, whether true or false, should be relied upon as the foundation of our faith. It is the *dependence* upon philosophical speculations that opens the flood-gates of error. Points of metaphysical theology may be amicably discussed, if they are not allowed to usurp the place which belongs exclusively to revealed truth. But we so elevate their importance, and so fiercely contend for them, that a doubt respecting a speculative theory, as certainly draws upon a man the imputation of heresy, as a rejection of the faith once delivered to the saints. If these points of ardent contention are *scriptural* truths, they can be supported by scriptural evidence. If they are not doctrines of scripture, let them have their proper rank among other inventions of philosophy.

The danger is great, that the system of truth which is revealed in the scriptures will be adulterated, by modifications and additions introduced by our metaphysical speculations. Statements which were, at first, intended merely as *illustrations* of scriptural doctrine, become gradually incorporated as a part of the system. In discourses from the desk, in theological discussions, in religious periodical publications, the results of our own reasoning, become so insensibly blended with revealed truth, that it is no easy task to separate the one from the other.

Defending the truths of revelation does not, of course, imply a defense of the philosophical theories or hypotheses which have been proposed, to explain the grounds, and reasons, and causes, of what is revealed. Theoretical explanations are not the *evidence* on which our belief of these truths should rest. We are bound to receive them, on the simple testimony of God. The phi-

philosophical explanation which is *added* to the scriptural statement, is no part of the revelation. We may believe in the resurrection of the dead, without attempting to explain the *manner* in which they will rise. We may believe that the soul is united to the body, without advancing a theory to explain the nature of this union. We may believe that God is omniscient, without giving a philosophical account of the grounds of this knowledge.

But how, it may be asked, can we believe that which we *do not understand*? We *do* understand the thing which we believe. But *something else*, supposed to be *connected* with this, we may perhaps not understand. What is revealed, that is, what is *made known to us*, we can certainly understand. In the common business and intercourse of life, we become acquainted with innumerable facts, that have causes, and consequences, and relations, which no philosophy can explain. Indeed *every* fact is connected, either immediately or remotely, with something else which is inexplicable. The nature of our minds, the power of life in our bodies, the air we breathe, the light of heaven, are full of mysteries. If we could not understand any thing, without being able to explain all its relations to other objects, we could know absolutely nothing.

Will it be said, that in this age of light and inquiry, there is no getting along without philosophical theology; that both Christians and opposers of the truth *will have their* theories; that if you do not furnish them with such as are sound, they will adopt those which are false and dangerous; that the doctrines of scripture will not be received, without some theory to explain them? Have we then come to this, that, with the Bible in our hands,

philosophy is, after all, the foundation of our belief, and the guide of our conduct ; that, though we profess to receive the scriptures as the word of the living God, yet we really give credit to his declarations, *so far only* as they conform to our preconceived philosophical opinions ; that the testimony of omniscience itself, is not sufficient to gain our assent to a doctrine, till our limited understandings have found out a theory to explain it ?

Though we are bound to use great caution, that our philosophical speculations be not incorporated with scriptural truth ; yet it is in vain to think of keeping them so distinct, that no harm will be done, should they even *contradict* each other. We often hear it said, that a man's *theology* may be correct, though his religious *philosophy* be erroneous. This may be very true. A man may have searched the scriptures so diligently and faithfully, that he truly believes the great facts and doctrines which they reveal ; and yet may fail in his attempts to discover their philosophical relations and dependencies. While indulging his fondness for abstract speculation, he may still manifest a settled purpose to adhere firmly to the testimony of revelation, whatever may become of his philosophy. But if he undertakes to make his erroneous opinions the *test* of biblical theology ; if he uses his metaphysics to *explain away* the genuine meaning of the passages which are opposed to his favorite theories ; his speculations are no longer to be looked upon as harmless. Much less are they to be considered as harmless, if they manifestly *contradict* the explicit declarations of scripture. They ought not to be exonerated from the charge of dangerous tendency, on the pretense, that what is true in theology may be false in philosophy,

or that what is true in philosophy may be false in theology. Every truth, to whatever department of knowledge it may belong, is consistent with every other truth. The *evidence* of a theological doctrine may be widely different from the evidence of a scientific principle. But no evidence whatever can render that true which is *not* true. Propositions may be *apparently* contradictory, when they are not really so ; and on the other hand, the contrariety which exists in fact between different propositions, may not always be seen, even by observing and discriminating minds. The man who has adopted a philosophical principle which is opposed to a doctrine of scripture, when he comes to discover the contradiction will certainly loosen his hold of one or the other. Which of the two he will relinquish, will depend upon his regard for the authority of scripture, compared with the reliance which he places upon the results of his own speculations.

Nearly allied to the opinion, that a man's theology may be correct, while his religious philosophy is erroneous, is another ; That if a man's belief in the doctrines of scripture is sound, his philosophy of those doctrines is a matter of *no importance* ; which is about as near the truth as another popular maxim ; That it is of little consequence what a man *believes*, provided his *practice* is right. If it be true, that in any case, a man's philosophical views have no *influence* upon his religious belief ; then these views may be, *with him*, nothing more than a subject of curious speculation. But when communicated *to others*, they may have an important bearing upon the reception or rejection of revealed truth. Differences in the philosophical explanation of scriptural doctrines may not always be so momentous, as to justify

alienation of feeling, and acrimonious contention, among those who are agreed in their belief of the great truths of Christianity. Still, the influence of an erroneous philosophy may be very injurious to the cause of sound theology. It can not long be retained, and circulated in the community, without affecting, more or less, the doctrinal belief of those who assent to it.

The philosophy which is found *in the Bible itself*, is as much a part of revelation, as the doctrines, the commands, or the predictions. We can no more be justified in rejecting any philosophical explanation contained in the scriptures, than in setting aside their historical or doctrinal statements. The one as well as the other, is a portion of that "faith once delivered to the saints" for which we are exhorted earnestly to contend. We are as much bound to receive the scriptural account of the *nature* of regeneration, as to admit the *fact* that men are born again. We are required not only to believe the *doctrine*, that salvation is by Jesus Christ; but to give full credit to the scriptures, when they shew us *how* we are to be saved by his name. To explain away the *philosophy* of the Bible, is to explain away the true meaning of its language.

Those who bring forward their theories, in opposition to the doctrines of scripture, may be met, either by exposing the fallacy of their particular views, or by convincing them, that a God of eternal truth is to be believed, whatever becomes of *our* hypotheses and speculations. The former method will be of little use, without the latter. If you merely combat a man's particular sophistry, you may only induce him to shift his ground; to substitute one false scheme for another. It may sometimes

be expedient to use means to *silence* those who array their metaphysical subtilties against the truths of revelation. It may be proper to meet them on their own ground, and to shew them, that upon their own principles of reasoning, their positions are unfounded. But even here, the object should be, not to *prove* the doctrines of scripture, by philosophical arguments ; but by shaking the objector's confidence in his own speculations, to lead him to rest his belief on the authority of divine testimony. Unless you bring him to this, your efforts will be lost upon him. If he hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, you will hope in vain to convert him to the true faith, by the aid of philosophy. He who believes only what he can prove without the aid of revelation, is still an infidel. He can never become a Christian, till he yields his assent to the testimony of God in the scriptures. And then, there will be no farther necessity of proving to him, *without* the Bible, the doctrines for which the Bible itself furnishes the best of all evidence.

Among the most injurious results from a perverted application of philosophical theology, we may rank its influence upon the opinions and feelings of persons in the ordinary walks of life. Of all modes of communication, the language of metaphysical philosophy is the least adapted to the apprehensions of common, uneducated men. How is a plain man to arrive at a knowledge of religious truth, by the refinements of metaphysical reasoning ? Suppose he makes the attempt. He has a new science to learn ; a science abounding in nice distinctions, requiring an analysis of the faculties and operations of the mind, and embracing a knowledge of

the relations of cause and effect, powers and susceptibilities, motives and actions. If he looks to the pulpit for instruction on these subjects, he is involved in the mysteries of metaphysical phraseology. His minister speaks to him in an unknown tongue. He finds that he has not only a new science, but a new *language* to learn. The language of common life, and common business, has not the philosophical precision which is requisite for nice metaphysical investigation. "A trait of the language of common life, is the want of strict logical accuracy in the use of words. This originates in the intellectual state and habits of the popular mind. Every one knows it is not one of those habits to refine, and make nice distinctions.—Why should we suppose the language of the peasant to be more precise and analytical, than his ideas can be?—We are practically aware, that there is great looseness in the popular, compared with the philosophical use of language."*

Had all the New England clergy been as careful as President Edwards was, to keep their metaphysics out of the pulpit, we should have had less confusion produced, by attempts to imitate his pre-eminent logical acuteness. Where are sermons to be found, less tinctured than his with theological philosophy, deriving their doctrines more directly from the Bible, and better adapted to the comprehension of an ordinary congregation?

What relation does the discussion respecting the Freedom of the Will bear to revealed theology? *What is the purpose* to be answered by Edwards's great work on the subject, supposing his reasoning and conclusions to

* Quarterly Christian Spectator, III, 122.

be sound? Is it to *lay the foundation* of a correct system of theology? Is it to *confirm* the truths which God has made known to us in his word? It may well be doubted, whether either of these objects ought to be aimed at, in such a discussion. The foundation of our religion is already laid, in the declarations of "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and addressed themselves to the understandings of men who were far from being versed in metaphysical refinements. The value of such a work as Edwards on the Will, consists not, as I think, in laying the foundation of important theological doctrines; but in exposing the sophistry of those speculating philosophers who undertake to *explain away* the passages of scripture which have a bearing on the subjects under discussion; or who reject the authority of the Bible altogether, because they find in it doctrines not according with their own philosophical theories. "Some have gone so far," says Edwards, "as confidently to assert, that if any book which pretends to be scripture teaches such doctrines, that alone is sufficient warrant for mankind to reject it, as what can not be the word of God. Some who have not gone so far have said, that if the scripture *seems* to teach any such doctrines, so contrary to reason, we are obliged to find out some other interpretation of those texts, where such doctrines seem to be exhibited." There is some advantage in occasionally meeting the objector on his own ground; in shewing him, that the assumptions which he makes are not even metaphysically supported. For this purpose, it is not necessary to demonstrate that they *must* be false. It is sufficient to show that they *may* be groundless. He who applies his metaphysical specula-

tions to the work of setting aside the natural construction of scripture, ought to be *sure*, that there is no defective link in his chain of argument.

We sometimes hear persons speak of what they are pleased to denominate Edwards's *theory* of the will ; as though it were his design to propose and maintain a philosophical system of his own ; whereas it was his proposed aim to examine the theories of *others* on the subject. The title of his work, is, " A careful and strict inquiry into the modern *prevailing* notions of that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential," &c. It is true, that in the execution of this design, he not unfrequently reasons in the way of *reductio ad absurdum*. Now when two positions are so related to each other, that either one or the other *must be true* ; an argument which proves one of them to be absurd, establishes the other of course. In this way, if Edwards's reasoning is valid, several points are indirectly, but surely maintained. They are results of arguments against the theories of others, rather than principles which it was the professed object of the work to establish.

The defenders of Calvinistic doctrines are sometimes represented as having substituted metaphysical reasoning for the plain common sense views of religious truth. In reference to this, Edwards observes, " I humbly conceive the foregoing reasoning, at least as to those things which are most material belonging to it, depends on no abstruse definitions or distinctions, or terms without a meaning. There is no high degree of refinement and abstruse speculation, in determining that a thing is not before it is, and so can not be the cause of itself ; or that the first act of free choice has not another act of free choice go-

ing before that, to excite or direct it ; or in determining that no choice is made, while the mind remains in a state of absolute indifference ; that preference and equilibrium never co-exist ; and that therefore no choice is made in a state of liberty consisting in indifference ; and that, so far as the will is determined by motives, exhibited and operating previous to the act of the will, so far it is not determined by the act of the will itself ; that nothing can begin to be, which before was not, without a cause, or some antecedent ground or reason why it then begins to be ; that effects *depend* on their causes, and are *connected* with them."

"It is so far from being true," he adds, "(whatever may be pretended) that the proof of the doctrine which has been maintained, depends on certain abstruse, unintelligible, metaphysical terms and notions ; and that the Arminian scheme, without needing such clouds and darkness for its defense, is supported by the plain dictates of *common sense* ; that the very reverse is most certainly true, and that to a great degree. It is fact that they, and not we, have confounded things with metaphysical, unintelligible notions and phrases ; and have drawn them from the light of plain truth, into the gross darkness of abstruse, metaphysical propositions, and words without a meaning. Their pretended demonstrations depend very much on such unintelligible, metaphysical phrases as *self-determination*, and *sovereignty of the will* ; and the metaphysical sense they put on such terms as *necessity*, *contingency*, *action*, *agency*, &c., quite diverse from their meaning as used in common speech ; and which, as they use them, are without any consistent meaning, or any manner of distinct, consistent ideas.—

Yea, we may be bold to say, these metaphysical terms, on which they build so much, are what they use without knowing what they mean themselves; they are pure *metaphysical sounds*, without any ideas whatsoever in their minds to answer them; inasmuch as it has been demonstrated, that there can not be any notion in the mind consistent with these expressions, as they pretend to explain them; because their explanations destroy themselves. No such notions as imply self-contradiction, and self-abolition, and this a great many ways, can subsist in the mind.—They have reasoned themselves, not by metaphysical *distinctions*, but metaphysical *confusion*, into many principles about moral agency, blame, praise, reward and punishment, which are, as has been shewn, exceeding contrary to the common sense of mankind."

SECTION XX.

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES WHICH
HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED TO PARTICULAR
DOCTRINES.

The moral government of God—Total depravity—Efficacious grace—
Is it the grace of God, or the agency of the sinner, that determines
whether he shall be converted or not?—Is the grace of God irresistible?
—The decrees or purposes of God—Personal election—Condi-
tional election—The final perseverance of Christians—None are
saved without perseverance in holiness—Concluding remarks.

At the close of his work, Edwards makes an applica-
tion of the principles which have been under discussion,
to some of the most important doctrines of revealed the-
ology. His great object has been to expose the fallacy
of those speculations respecting accountable agency
which have been so often applied to the scriptures, to
explain away what appears to him to be their natural
and true signification.

The first inference which he draws from his examin-
ation of the subject is the doctrine, "That God's moral
government over mankind, his treating them as *moral*
agents,—is not inconsistent with a *determining disposal*
of all events, of every kind, throughout the universe, in
his providence; either by positive efficiency or permis-
sion." The scriptures, in speaking of the purposes and
agency of God, in relation to the hearts and actions of
men, represent him as *causing* righteousness to spring
forth, *directing* the hearts of his people, *turning* them at
his pleasure, *inclining* them to obey him, determining

by his *counsel* the things to be done by human agency, *making* them obedient, *keeping* them from falling, *working* in them *to will and to do*, &c. After weighing well the import of these and other similar expressions, can any one escape from the conclusion, that they imply a *determining influence* over human volitions; unless he has a preconceived and settled opinion, that such a doctrine *can not* be true, and therefore, can not be found in the oracles of God?

The next application of the results of Edwards's reasoning, in his work on the Will, is to the scriptural representations of the "*total depravity and corruption of man's nature*, whereby his heart is wholly under the power of sin, and he is utterly unable, without the interposition of sovereign grace, savingly to love God, believe in Christ, or do any thing that is truly good and acceptable in God's sight. This doctrine supposes no other necessity of sinning, than a *moral* necessity; which, as has been shewn, does not at all excuse sin; and supposes no other inability to obey any command, or perform any duty, even the most spiritual and exalted, but a moral inability, which, as has been proved, does not excuse persons in the non-performance of any good thing."

The uniform tendency to sin, from which none of our race are exempt, till they are subjects of the renewing grace of God, can not be accounted for on the supposition that our acts of choice are fortuitous. Chance does not cast its lots with such unvarying regularity. There must be something in the nature of man, and of the circumstances in which he is placed, which renders it certain that he will fall into sin.

"The things which have been observed," says Edwards, "do also take off the main objections of Armin-

ians against the doctrine of *efficacious grace*.—God gives virtue, holiness, and conversion to sinners, by an influence which determines the effect in such a manner, that the effect will *infallibly follow* by a moral necessity; which is what Calvinists mean by efficacious and irresistible grace.” Do you inquire, whether the effect here spoken of is produced by divine influence *alone*, without the concurring agency of him who is renewed? It is not produced without the *consequent* agency of the man; for his agency in turning to God is the very effect which is produced. “The main thing meant by the word efficacious,” says Edwards, “is this, it being *decisive*.—That cause only can be said to be an efficacious cause, whose efficacy determines, reaches, and produces, the effect.—The grand point of the controversy really is, what is it that determines, disposes, and *decides* the matter, whether there shall be saving virtue in the heart or not.”* The question is, whether it is the grace of God, or agency of man, that determines this. In one sense, it may be truly said, that the man who repents makes the determination. His repenting itself is an act of deciding; and it is *his* act, not the agency of God. But if this act was *rendered certain* by divine influence, then there was a *previous* determination on the part of God, of which the man’s decision is the effect. “When I say, that the acts and influences of the Spirit determine the effects,” says Edwards, “it is not meant, that man has nothing to do to determine in the affair. The soul of man undoubtedly, in every instance, does voluntarily determine with respect to his own consequent actions. But this determination of the will of man, or voluntary determination of the soul of man, is the effect deter-

* *Efficacious Grace*, Sec. 38, 61, 63.

mined. This determining act of the soul is not denied, but supposed, as it is the effect we are speaking of, that the influence of God's Spirit determines.—In the scriptures, the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, God worketh in you, both to will and to do.”*

Some perhaps may ask, Is it not, after all, the sinner that determines whether the purpose of God to convert him shall be effectual or not? Is it not his refusal or compliance that decides the point? To this I answer, that it is the very object of renewing grace to *prevent* a refusal on the part of the sinner, and to *secure* his compliance. The agency of the man in repenting no more determines whether the agency of the Spirit shall be effectual, than any other effect determines whether it shall be produced by its cause. Every effect, by taking place, *gives evidence* of the efficacy of its cause. But this does not imply, that it belongs to the effect to determine whether its cause shall be efficacious or not.

This brings us to the question so frequently agitated, Whether the grace of God is *irresistible*, as well as efficacious; a correct answer to which depends principally on an explanation of the meaning of the term. Are we to understand irresistible grace to be that to which *no opposition* can be made; or that to which no *such* opposition can be made, as will prevent the grace from being

* Efficacious Grace, Sec. 64, 72.

efficacious? Opposition may undoubtedly be made to the sanctifying grace of God, till this influence is given in such measure as to *overcome* the opposition; till there is a cordial compliance with the design of the Spirit. When this change is effected, the resistance must cease, unless, as Edwards expresses it, "a man with his will can resist his own will;" or unless *some degree* of opposition may still remain, because the man is sanctified only in part. But has not the sinner *power* to resist the grace of God? *Could* he not resist, if he would? Undoubtedly he could, *if* he would. He has what Edwards calls a *natural* power to resist. But the very thing which the Spirit does, in renewing the heart, is the taking away of the *moral* power, that is, the willingness to resist.

Some perhaps may still inquire, whether, in this statement, the proper order of cause and effect is not inverted. Instead of assuming that it is the grace of God which overcomes the sinner's opposition, may we not suppose, that the reason why this grace is efficacious is, that the sinner first ceases his resistance, and allows himself to be converted; and that the reason why *all* are not converted is, that many persist in their opposition, and thus prevent the agency of the Spirit from becoming efficacious in changing their hearts? The answer to this is, that when we find in the scriptures, so numerous and express declarations, that God gives a new heart and a right spirit, that He causes man to walk in his statutes, that He works in them to will and to do, that He inclines their hearts to obey him, that He turns them at his pleasure, &c., we are bound to receive this testimony as coming from Him who knows perfectly the nature of our minds, and the manner in which they are brought

to obey his will. "I desire it may be shewn, if it can be," says Edwards, "that ever any terms, that are fuller and stronger, are used more frequently, or in greater variety, to signify God's being the author, efficient, and bestower of any kind of benefit, than as to the bestowment of true virtue or goodness of heart."* "The main objection of Arminians against this doctrine is, that it is inconsistent with their self-determining freedom of will; and that it is repugnant to the nature of virtue, that it should be wrought in the heart, by the determining efficacy and power of another, instead of its being owing to a self-moving power." For an answer to this objection, he refers to the discussion in the preceding parts of his work.

The reasonings of Edwards which obviate the objections that are commonly brought against a divine providence and influence, determining the actions of accountable agents, have a similar application to what are called the decrees of God, or more properly his *purposes*. If the freedom and accountability of men are not inconsistent with his agency in inclining their wills, neither are they inconsistent with his *purpose* to incline them. Whatever it is right for God *to do*, it is right for Him to purpose to do. If it is, at any time, right for Him to purpose to influence the hearts of his creatures, it has been *forever* right for him thus to purpose. "And as nothing is new in God, in any respect," says Edwards, "but all things are perfectly and equally in his view from eternity; hence it will follow, that his designs or purposes are not things formed anew, founded on any new views or appearances, but are all *eternal* purposes." There is nothing, however, in the statements of Edwards, which countenances the absurd supposition, that

* Efficacious Grace, Sec. 27.

God purposes the *end*, without regard to the *means* by which the end is to be obtained. The means and the end are equally objects of his purpose.

Among the immutable purposes of God, is to be included his determination respecting the individuals of our race who shall be finally saved. The opinion of Edwards and other Calvinists on this point, is what is commonly denominated the doctrine of *personal election*. It is not merely the selection of a particular tribe or nation, to the enjoyment of special religious privileges, as God chose the Jews to be a peculiar people to himself. It is not simply determining, what He has indeed determined, that those and those only shall be saved who He foresees will repent, and believe, and obey. It is not an election without foreknowledge, a knowledge not only of all actual events, but of the results of all possible measures. But it is something *more* than foreknowledge; something more than fulfilling his promise that all who accept of the offers of the gospel shall obtain eternal life. It is a choice not only to *salvation*, but to *sanctification* also; to holiness of life, as an indispensable requisite for admission to heaven. "God hath, from the beginning," says the apostle, "chosen [elected] you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.—Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience."*

The election of which we are speaking, is not merely a *conditional* election; a purpose to save certain individuals, *provided* they comply with the offers of the gospel. It is a determination to *render* them obedient; to *secure*

* 2 Thess. ii, 13. 1 Peter i, 2.

their acceptance of the terms of salvation. Our Savior not only says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," but also, "All that the Father giveth me *shall* come to me;—and, This is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which He giveth me, I should lose nothing." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen [elected] us in him, before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy.*"* This purpose of God is called an election, as it makes a distinction between some individuals and others; it brings a blessing to some, which is not conferred upon all. The *offers* of the gospel are made to multitudes who are not elected. "Many are called, but few chosen.—There is a remnant, according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works.—Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh; but the *election* hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."† This electing purpose is not made *arbitrarily*, without good and sufficient reasons; reasons by which infinite wisdom and benevolence are guided, but which are among the "secret things that belong to God."

Personal election is not a provision that certain individuals shall be saved *without the use of means*. A man will neither be admitted to heaven without holiness, nor become holy without means. "I endure all things," says Paul, "for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."‡ It is a gross perversion of the scripture doctrine of election, to represent it as implying that if a

* John vi, 37, 39. Ephesians i, 3, 4.

† Rom. xi, 5, 6, 7.

‡ 2 Tim. ii, 10.

man is elected he will be saved, whatever he may do, or whatever he may neglect to do. He is as truly elected to holiness of life, as to final salvation; and as truly elected to the proper use of means, as to the sanctification which, with the divine blessing, results from their use. "Give diligence," says the apostle, "to make your calling and election sure."

The purpose of God to sanctify and save the elect is not inconsistent with their *freedom and accountability*. For if, by his efficacious grace, He can secure their repentance, and obedience, without impairing their freedom, his *purpose* to do this, can not interfere with their accountable agency. With their own free choice, they accept of offered mercy, and devote their lives to the service of God. They choose to be saved in the way which He has appointed. They desire to be delivered from sin, as well as from punishment. They are not compelled to be saved against their will; nor do they believe and obey against their will.

If human volitions are contingent, so that nothing exterior to the mind of the agent can have any influence in giving direction to his choice; personal election must either be nothing more than God's determination to save those only who He *foresees* will happen to become holy; or it must be a purpose to give eternal life to certain individuals, whether they become holy or not. The latter is the doctrine so unjustly imputed to Edwards and his followers, and by them so distinctly disavowed and condemned.

By the election of some, no bar is thrown in the way of the salvation of those who are not elected. They are left where all might justly have been left, and where

all *would* have been left, if God had not purposed to grant his sanctifying grace to secure the salvation of some. They are left in the way which they have chosen for themselves, and in which they choose to continue. It is not the unmerited favor conferred upon others, that closes the the gate of heaven against them. It is their persisting in a rejection of the mercy, which others have been induced to accept. Salvation is offered to them upon the same terms as to the elect. The purpose of election is not the ground of their condemnation; nor does it prevent them from believing and obeying. No injustice is done to them, in leaving them to the retribution of law, when they refuse to accept of forgiveness according to the provisions of the Gospel. They have no right to demand, that God shall either bestow his renewing grace upon all or upon none; that because they refuse to repent, He shall not "have mercy on whom He will have mercy."

The last point to which President Edwards makes an application of the principles discussed in his work, is the doctrine that all true Christians will *persevere* in holiness to the end of life. This does not imply that any will be saved *without* holiness continued through life; or that perseverance is continued *without means*, without exhortations and warnings, without cautions against the danger of falling, without the strenuous efforts of Christians to work out their own salvation. It does not imply, that there is any thing in the *nature* of holiness which will effectually secure against apostacy. It is no part of the doctrine, that they will persevere, whatever they may do or fail to do; that is, that they will persevere without persevering. It does not imply, that they will be saved *unconditionally*, without continued

repentance, and faith, and obedience. But it supposes that God has promised, that by his efficacious grace, He will *secure* to believers their compliance with the conditions of salvation. It is declared not only that "he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved," but that the elect are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation:—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,—though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.—Being confident of this very thing," says the Apostle, "that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."*

Notwithstanding these and similar declarations of Scripture, we are met with the objection, that the doctrine which they appear to support can not be true, because it is inconsistent with the freedom of the will, and accountable human agency. The aid of the transforming power of criticism is invoked, to put such a construction upon these passages, that they will not express a meaning in opposition to the laws of moral agency. It is claimed, that the signification of the texts *must* be different from that which is derived from them by natural and obvious interpretation. The doctrine of the certain perseverance of all true believers, is indeed inconsistent with what is frequently *called* liberty of will. If human volitions are independent of all directing influence from without the mind of the agent, if they are so contingent that they are determined by nothing antecedent to their taking place, and if this is essential to their nature, as the acts of an accountable being; then it is clear, that nothing in heaven or on earth can secure the continued fidelity of the Christian, even for a single hour. If he happens to remain faithful through

* Psalm xxxvii, 23, 24. Phil i, 6

life, his perseverance is to be ascribed to the determination of chance.

But if God, by his efficacious grace, can secure the *commencement* of holiness in the heart, without impairing the freedom and accountability of the agent, He can *continue* this work of mercy from day to day, and from year to year, even to the end of life, without interfering with the liberty of the will. The same arguments of Edwards which go to shew, that the renewing grace of God is not inconsistent with accountable agency in the creature, may, with equal propriety, be applied to the doctrine of perseverance.

Edwards appears to have anticipated, with prophetic discernment, the kind of reception which his opponents would give his work. In his concluding remarks, he observes, "Whether the things which have been alledged are liable to any tolerable answer, in the way of calm, intelligible, and strict reasoning, I must leave others to judge: But I am sensible they are liable to one sort of answer. It is not unlikely, that some who value themselves on the supposed rational and generous principles of the modern fashionable divinity, will have their indignation and disdain raised at the sight of this discourse, and on perceiving what things are pretended to be proved in it. And if they think it worthy of being read, or of so much notice as to say much about it, they may probably renew the usual exclamations, with additional vehemence and contempt, about the *fate of the heathen*, Hobbes's *necessity*, and *making men mere machines*; accumulating the terrible epithets of *fatal*, *unfrustrable*, *inevitable*, *irresistible*, &c."

